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Mr Peter Whelan
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Dear Mr Whelan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Impact of Extended Services

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 October to look at the impact of extended services on children and young people and their families.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff, parents, partners, pupils and representatives from the local authority including the extended schools co-ordinator. I was also able to draw on relevant school documentation and documentation kindly provided by the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the extended provision was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Extended activities contribute well to the development of speaking, listening, negotiation and social skills. The physical benefits arising out of the extensive football programme and the choir are clear and the self-esteem which young people are gaining as a result is marked. After school clubs and residential activities aid children's progress and pupils enjoy and benefit from assisting with school events. There are notable examples where provision very effectively extends pupils' learning. The approach taken to inclusion works

well and pupils appear universally keen to involve themselves in enrichment activities.

Work undertaken with parents by the school, and through your partner organisations like family learning, has left parents well disposed to becoming involved in the life of the school. Activities of this nature have enabled parents to learn more about supporting their own child and through their contact with teachers they have viewed behaviour management techniques and specific strategies for their child which they rehearse at home. Extended activities have not only enriched parents' experiences but helped tackle the isolation that can emerge from being a parent of a child with special educational needs.

Quality of provision

There is a good range of extended activities including sport, trips, the school council, youth club and the school choir. The football project enables pupils to develop and maintain independent long term interest in mainstream sport and has been handled sensitively by the school and the host club. Likewise, the long-standing youth club for pupils, their siblings and friends is successful and popular. Both of these examples reflect pupils' needs and appear sustainable. Family learning has been very successful with good course retention and outcomes. A higher proportion of parents than is found normally have been engaged in classes in literacy, information and communication technology (ICT), and maths.

Leadership and management of extended services

Leadership and management are satisfactory but it is of concern that neither senior staff nor Governors yet relate to the national extended schools programme. The school strategic plan 2006 to 2009 sets out community involvement and community use of premises as a longer term development, but the opportunity is being missed to draw on lessons from the extended schools initiative locally and nationally, for instance in relation to parental needs assessment. The extended schools coordinator, Benfleet and Thundersley interschool cluster (BATIC), has improved communication, information flow and co-ordination among schools and the BATIC newsletter has attempted to provide guidance and encouragement based around strands of the 'core offer'. However, the audit of provision carried out through BATIC is too general. You rightly express concern about the difficulties inherent in engaging with those parents whom the school views as most in need of support. In the context of the extended schools programme, the opportunity may now arise to tackle this issue.

Inclusion

The school generally provides a responsive formal and informal curriculum and there is evidence to suggest that some of the positive outcomes achieved

in relation to enrichment activities for the students are sustainable. The degree of inclusion is very high. The approach taken to inclusion works well and pupils appear universally keen to involve themselves in enrichment activities. The school has successfully created a climate where children are expected to participate and the vast majority do so with enthusiasm.

Areas for improvement include:

- familiarise Governors and senior school managers with the aims of the extended schools national programme
- devise more precise objectives within the school development plan with regards to enrichment activities and how these are to be sustained
- seek support from the local authority/extended school co-ordinator in:
 - auditing what the school already provides in the context of Governments extended school offer with a view to it maximising the benefits of the national programme
 - carrying out a more objective assessment of parental support needs and consider how these can be better met locally.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop extended services in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Tony Gallagher
Her Majesty's Inspector