

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6644
www.ofsted.gov.uk



16 October 2006

Mrs Holmes
Headteacher
Lifton Community Primary School
North Road
Lifton
Devon
PL16 0EH

Dear Mrs Holmes

Ofsted Survey Inspection Programme – The degree and effectiveness of parent and carer involvement in children and young people's education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 September 2006 to look at the degree and effectiveness of parent and carer involvement in children's education.

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 and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of one lesson. The judgements are specifically in relation to the degree and effectiveness of parent and carer involvement under the following headings.

The overall effectiveness of the degree and effectiveness of parent and carer involvement in children's education was judged to be good, with some outstanding features.

Achievement and standards including personal development

The impact of parental and carer involvement on achievement, standards and personal development is good.

- Standards remain above the national average in all core subjects at Key Stage 1. Results at Key Stage 2 improved in 2006 compared with the previous year, with the expected proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 4. Whilst those achieving higher levels in Mathematics and Science were in line with national averages, too few pupils achieved higher levels in English.
- Academic improvement for pupils with specific learning difficulties and disabilities varies according to those needs, but each is making at least satisfactory progress, whether it be in small or rapid steps. The progress of the higher attaining pupils is not as secure, with not all pupils achieving the levels of which they are capable.
- Learners, including those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve well in their personal development.
- All pupils benefit when parents become involved around the school or in special activities. They become motivated and enthusiastic learners and enjoy their study.
- Individual children benefit when parents are involved in helping them at home, for example in hearing them read regularly, helping them focus on the presentation of their work or supporting them with grammar and punctuation.
- The impact upon children's mathematical understanding is less certain: parents recognise that they lack information about up-to-date methodologies and pupils sometimes become confused when parents try and help. The school is aware of this and is currently preparing helpful material to assist parents in working with their children at home.
- The school has an exemplary record for attendance and works in close partnership with parents to achieve this.

Quality of teaching and learning including assessment, support and guidance

The impact of parent and carer involvement in these areas is good.

- The school successfully involves parents in teaching and learning, both directly and indirectly.
- Pupils are assessed regularly against National Curriculum levels and this is shared with parents, although they are not directly involved in informing assessment.
- Parental attendance at meetings is very good and the school usually takes steps to liaise with parents who find it difficult to attend. Parents are invited to meetings where pupil targets are explained. This is more effective when the targets are closely tailored to individual needs, rather than group targets, and enables parents to understand more fully what their child needs to do to improve.
- The written report to parents comes too late in the school year to be of maximum benefit. However, parents overwhelmingly feel well informed and

excellent relationships between staff and parents exist throughout the school, including for those parents of children with particular needs.

- Excellent support is provided to pupils through a good ratio of teaching assistants, a high proportion of whom are parents, and the presence of many regular parent volunteers.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Programmes of learning and activities take account of the needs and interests of learners.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and there are opportunities for them to share activities with their parents, for example during Special Activities Week and on many outings.
- Teachers include the involvement of parents in planning. They utilise parental skills and knowledge wherever possible to provide high quality lessons and experiences for pupils.
- Pupils enjoy talks by specialists and specially arranged visits to places of interest where parents work.
- Good practice when pupils enter the school, such as providing helpful information for parents about developing their child's independence and in developing early reading and writing skills, are particularly helpful in engaging parents and enabling them to support their child fully.
- Pupils and parents are also well prepared at the end of Year 6 for the transition to secondary education.

Leadership and management of parent and carer involvement

Leadership and management in relation to parental involvement are good.

- The whole school is committed to improving parental involvement, as is demonstrated in the school's vision statement.
- The school has identified improving parental involvement in their school improvement plan and on their cycle of monitoring. However, this remains too focussed on what they intend to do, with insufficient reference to the impact of actions on achievement and standards.
- The school has many successful and firmly embedded initiatives for parental involvement. However, it has not evaluated which of these initiatives have really made a difference to pupils' learning and progress, other than informally in individual cases.
- The school has correctly identified some key areas for development, such as improving information to parents about the curriculum and teaching.

- The school has recently introduced a Parent Council, giving them ownership of the guidelines for the group and deciding upon the group's priorities. It has always ensured that working parties for developing policies include parents. Parents are regularly consulted through questionnaires and their ideas are used to make positive changes to the school community.

Inclusion

The impact of parent and carer involvement on inclusion is good.

- This is a truly inclusive school which works hard to identify pupils' needs as soon as possible and meets them by working closely with parents and other professionals to ensure the outcomes for each child are positive.
- The school closely monitors those pupils that are particularly vulnerable, including looked after children.
- It provides good suggestions for parents as to how they might best help their child at home.
- Individual support is provided for many pupils, but there is a whole school approach to working together in an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual support.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- monitor and evaluate the impact of parental involvement more closely to identify which methods the school uses are most/least successful in relation to raising achievement
- ensure that parents are always equipped with all the necessary information to support their child at home throughout the year
- continue to find ways of improving the involvement of all parents in assessment and target setting.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop parental involvement even further 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector