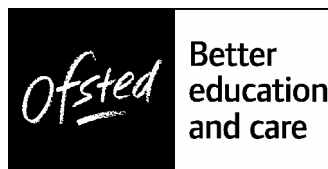


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13 February 2007

Ms Lisa Biggin
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Biggin

Ofsted survey inspection programme - Evaluation of the impact of extended services on children and young people and their families 2006/07

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 January 2007 to evaluate the impact of your extended services.

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 and pupils, scrutiny of documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the extended services in your school was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Standards are now broadly in line with national ones, which means pupils make very good progress. Extended services have an excellent impact on both standards and progress.

- Standards of personal development have been transformed. Four years ago, behaviour was extremely poor, with violence and abuse from pupils common. Negative attitudes to learning prevailed. Now, pupils behave very well, show

highly positive attitudes and enjoy strong parental support. The headteacher adopted a “zero tolerance” approach and set up numerous strategies to help pupils acquire self-esteem and social and learning skills and to ensure real enjoyment of education. This has been achieved by fundamental changes, particularly the expansion of day care and nursery provision, first-rate transition arrangements and a rich range of extra-curricular activities. In addition, the school has introduced a radically modified curriculum, strong on local relevance and active learning, and has created exceptional links with parents.

- Pupils’ attainment on entry is very low, so that the school does well to help them reach academic standards close to national average. Results have taken some time to improve, but current Year 6 standards now match national levels in English, exceed those for mathematics and broadly match those for science. Added-value is strongly positive, following on from the impressive conduct of pupils, their keenness to learn and participate, and the way extended services have contributed to their confidence and mastery of basic learning skills.
- Younger pupils also show marked improvements. Since 2004, when extended services became significant, the scores in the Foundation Stage have risen steeply in speech and language, social development, understanding of shape and space and creative and physical skills.

Quality of provision

The quality of extended services is exceptional.

- It is hard to do justice to the great range of services offered and their consistently high quality. All elements of the core offer are more than met.
- Childcare is highly valued by parents and includes wraparound day care as well as after-school, breakfast, parent and toddler clubs, Families Matter and others.
- A varied menu of activities is provided for all ages, interests and abilities. Craft club, e-pals, play leaders’ scheme, homework club, sports clubs, music provision, Comenius projects with three European partners and the gifted and talented programme are amongst many. A consistent view from outside providers is that Rossmere pupils contribute more and gain more than most other children they encounter.
- Parenting support is highly effective because the school is astute at recognising needs and has an impressive network of providers to hand. “Nearly at Nursery” and “Nearly at Reception” help parents and children prepare for each stage of education and ensure remarkably smooth transition. Another ten services, including parenting classes, vocational training courses and the Chattersacks service, help parents value education and support their children’s learning.

- Swift and easy referral is effective because links to specialists are so good and staff know parents. Many more services than usual are involved. Behaviour support and community mental health service personnel quote Rossmere as the school most likely to use their expertise well. Parents and pupils are referred early and given excellent support before and after referral.
- The wider community uses the school extensively. Over 20 groups use the school and linked providers, from Brownies to adult education. For many adults in the area, who found school negative and unrewarding, this leads to a completely new and positive attitude to school.

Leadership and management of the extended services

The leadership and management of extended services are outstanding.

- The headteacher has led radical changes to the ethos and life of the school, largely through the promotion of extended services. She is extremely well supported by able colleagues, who have shown they can sustain these services in her absence.
- The same blend of exceptional vision, energy and persistence also applies to the way it has enlisted the support of many other partners. Neighbouring schools (primary and secondary), the adjacent Surestart Centre, universities, social services, community officers and the local authority all contribute enthusiastically because they see the school use their input so well.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is exceptional.

- The identification of needs is particularly swift and accurate so that vulnerable pupils always receive early and appropriate support.
- Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) are heavily represented in the extra-curricular activities provided. LDD support is extremely well organised and helps these pupils make good progress.
- Families in greatest need are made a priority for the parental support services. Referral to other providers is efficient so parents receive specialist help quickly.
- Higher-attaining pupils have an excellent range of opportunities to have their skills and imagination challenged.

Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement are minor, given the outstanding quality of your current provision, but include:

- analysing data about pupils to see how closely participation in extended services matches improved academic success and personal development. This would potentially help you identify the most effective individual services or combination of services.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to implement extended services.

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

Robert Drew
Additional Inspector