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06 February 2007

Mrs Noreen Collins
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Dear Mrs Collins

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Impact of extended services on children and young people and their families

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 January 2007 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, a governor, pupils, parents and the school's partners, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of activities.

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

The provision has been developed by the school, over several years, primarily to help overcome the barriers to learning faced by many pupils in this socially and economically disadvantaged area. The extent and quality of the provision reflects the school's sense of its Catholic mission and its commitment to offering high quality care, guidance and support to pupils. The extended services make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development, their well-being and their academic achievement. They also enhance the parenting skills of a significant number of parents and carers.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress in their time at the school, particularly in English. This is confirmed by data and the recent Section 5 inspection report.

- Pupils' starting point is low and for many language skills are poor. From 2002 to 2005, standards rose. This was reflected in pupils' results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 which rose more rapidly than the national rate of improvement. Pupils made significantly better than average progress in this key stage.
- In 2006 standards fell, notably in mathematics and science and the pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 was less good. However, this cohort included a high proportion of pupils who joined the school late.
- The extended services make a good contribution to pupils' personal development, having a positive impact on attitudes to learning and enjoyment of it, attendance and behaviour.
- They also affect academic achievement. For example, the nurture group and the learning mentor provide personal, social and emotional support for pupils who find learning and/or behaving difficult. Pupils value this provision very highly. The school provided compelling evidence that, as well as boosting confidence and self-esteem, such support has enabled pupils to exceed their academic targets.
- The school promotes attendance very effectively. The attendance rate is above the national average.

Quality of provision

The school works with many partners to offer a good range of extended services which are greatly valued by participants. Provision takes account of consultation with parents and pupils and the school does its utmost to provide what they want.

- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including many clubs for sports, and pupils who show particular aptitude are extremely well supported in developing their skills.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of exercise for health.
- Pupils' horizons are broadened through a very wide range of visitors and visitors which enhance the curriculum. These include, for example, artists who work with pupils under the auspices of Sure Start and partnerships with theatres.
- There is good take-up of the wrap-around care provided by the before-and-after-school clubs and the holiday club. This provision is appreciated and enjoyed by pupils who attend and meets the needs of parents and carers.

- The extent of support provided for vulnerable pupils is exceptionally good, particularly through the nurture group and the work of the learning mentor, which includes bereavement counselling.
- Courses for parents and carers to help them develop their parenting skills have been successful. Parents' appreciation of their value is evident in their decision to continue meeting for mutual support. The school's offer provides a venue for the local community, for instance by providing a venue for the credit union and the community action group.

Leadership and management of extended services

The extended provision is well led and soundly managed.

- The school has established a working group, which includes representatives of governors and support staff. This group represents the school in work on extended provision with the local authority and other local schools.
- Governors are well informed about the provision. They and staff are committed to providing services, in consultation with its stakeholders, that meet identified needs and they can point to their successes.
- The integration of planning for the development of extended services and that for school improvement, though present in parts, is limited. Similarly, though some evaluation of the effectiveness of the services takes place, the school has yet to introduce systematic measurement of the impact of its extended provision.
- The school has recognised and nurtured the potential of non-teaching staff and enabled them to make a very strong contribution to its provision.

Inclusion

This is a very strong feature of the school's work, with the extended provision reflecting the school's commitment to enabling all pupils to achieve as well as they can. Provision for pupils who face problems in their lives and those with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties is a particular strength.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of extended services on pupils' achievement both academically and in their personal development, so the school can fully measure their effectiveness
- the integration of planning for development and improvement of the extended services with that for the school.

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

Pat Kime
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools