

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



24 January 2006

Mrs J Hooper
Headteacher
St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School
Tile Barn Close
Cove
Farnborough
Hampshire
GU14 8LS

Dear Mrs Hooper

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, parents and pupils, during my visit on 16 January 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 parents assisting with activities. 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.

Achievement and standards including personal development

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

- Results at Key Stage 1 improved again last year and mostly exceeded national averages. As with other schools across the county, fewer Key Stage 1 pupils than predicted achieved the higher levels in writing, although results still met

the national average. Writing is now a whole school focus for this year. To address the needs of more able pupils, lessons incorporate an increased level of challenge and problem solving. Pupils' progress is monitored closely.

- Last year, at Key Stage 2, not all pupils achieved the results of which they were capable. Detailed analysis of the disappointing 2006 results has enabled the school to more clearly understand the types of support and interventions necessary to ensure that all pupils successfully reach their potential. Pupils' progress is now tracked carefully and their grouping in literacy and mathematics is adapted when necessary, ensuring that work is matched to their abilities.
- The school works closely with parents and carers to promote pupils' personal development, which is very good. The school works very closely with vulnerable children and those from ethnic minorities to ensure they also make the best progress they can.
- Not enough has been done to fully understand the role that all parents can actually play in helping to raise children's achievement and to make the very best use of their willingness to support their children.
- Parents are very satisfied with the communication links the school has with them. Staff operate an open-door policy and ensure they make time for families where there are concerns, including pupils' progress, behaviour and rates of attendance. Systems for monitoring such important issues are effective.
- There are thorough arrangements in place for new pupils, which includes home visits. This ensures that parents have confidence in the school and understand the expectations of the partnership and so pupils settle quickly. The "buddy" system between older and younger pupils further enhances the settling process and parents find this reassuring.

Quality of teaching and learning including assessment, support and guidance

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

- Parents receive regular information about their children's progress including Autumn and Spring parents' meetings and an annual written report. The school strives to ensure these are held at times convenient to the parents and stringently follows up the very small percentage of parents unable to attend.
- All pupils benefit when parents become involved around the school. They become motivated and enthusiastic learners and enjoy their studies, particularly special projects and any topics which specifically harness their personal interests. Some parents run the After School Club, extra curricular clubs, share their knowledge and skills as and when required, and are regular classroom volunteers.
- Individual children benefit when parents are involved in helping them at home, for example in hearing them read regularly, helping them with

spellings or with times tables, and supporting them with research type projects.

- The school has ensured that it consistently follows its homework policy and more recently that all staff give helpful advice through the scheme of marking. This mostly assists pupils in understanding what to do next and is informative too for parents when they look at their child's work.
- Parents have an overall awareness of their child's targets, but the school is not sufficiently pro-active in raising the profile of these to ensure that parents know and understand how to help their child to achieve these or improve their progress.

Quality of the curriculum

The impact of parental involvement on the quality of the curriculum is good.

- Parents find the termly curriculum evenings informative. Whilst these are closely linked to the outcomes for children, they are not always linked to where the school needs to raise achievement most specifically and more immediately.
- The school has undertaken some high quality work with pupils in order to work towards accreditation for the Healthy Schools Award. However, it has not sufficiently followed through all of its pioneering work on the appropriateness of the contents of children's packed lunch boxes and more needs to be done with parents and pupils to improve the nutritional quality of these.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and there are opportunities for them to share activities with their parents, for example during Christmas cake making or on outings.
- The curriculum is enhanced by extra-curricular clubs, some of which are run by parents, for example choir, football and the After School Club. Pupils and parents have some opportunities to learn alongside each other, for example at the English Club.
- A range of Foundation Stage information is given to the parents of the younger pupils at the beginning of the reception year. This includes information about the six areas of learning and good practice in helping their child develop their early reading and writing skills. It also makes clear the expectations for parents in supporting their child through the early years.
- The curriculum is successfully adapted to the needs of the diverse school community and the school seeks to involve parents of pupils from all faiths and cultures in it.
- Transition units in English and mathematics contribute to the effective arrangements for pupils' transfer to secondary schools.

Leadership and management of parent and carer involvement

Leadership and management in relation to parental involvement are good.

- The headteacher and senior team have a strong commitment to involving parents and carers in the education of its pupils and these principles are made clear to parents from the outset, so that they feel involved in the partnership and are clear of the school's expectations.
- The school has many successful and firmly embedded initiatives for parental involvement. However, it has not evaluated which of these initiatives have most made a difference to pupils' learning and progress.
- There is a proactive Friends association with representation from staff and parents. The association does much to improve and enhance the school environment, the quality of resources and the overall outcomes for pupils.
- Parents' views are important and hence they are regularly consulted with.
- The quality of monitoring and evaluation is improving, although the school has not capitalised on how it could more specifically utilise parents to help raise achievement and standards, particularly in the key areas of mathematics and science.

Inclusion

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

- The school works effectively with parents to identify pupils' individual needs as soon as possible and put in place appropriate programmes of support both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and who speak English as an additional language are all effectively supported to make the best progress they can. The "Rainbow" group is particularly successful in raising pupils' confidence and achievement when it is most needed.
- There is particularly close liaison with parents of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and so they are very well informed.
- The school works hard to meet the needs of vulnerable children, including those who are looked after. It also strives to build positive relationships with those parents who are more difficult to reach.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- considering more closely the impact of school initiatives on raising achievement, particularly in key areas of mathematics and science, and enabling parents to take a greater role in contributing to this
- ensuring that parents and pupils are more effectively informed of their targets and know and understand how they can improve their progress

- developing a further whole school commitment to raising awareness of healthy eating and involving parents in this to particularly ensure the improved nutritional quality of pupils' lunch boxes.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop parental involvement further in conjunction with raising attainment and improving outcomes for children.

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