

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



19 June 2007

Mr R Austin
The Headteacher
Higher Bebington Junior School
Mill Road
Higher Bebington
Wirral
Merseyside
CH63 8QE

Dear Mr Austin

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTC)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18 June 2007 to look at the way that learning outside the classroom contributes to your school's curriculum and to pupils' achievement and personal development.

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 are 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 relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of some lessons taking place outside the classroom and seeing the school at work.

The overall effectiveness of the contribution made by learning outside the classroom to the curriculum is outstanding.

Achievement and standards, including personal development

- The school sets challenging attainment targets and has successfully met these over the last three years. Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above national averages and the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in these core subjects is exceptional.
- These high outcomes are, to a great extent, due to the good quality of teaching which is varied and challenging for all pupils.

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are excellent. They respond well to the lesson activities and clearly enjoy their time at school. You strongly believe that learning outside the classroom (LOTC) activities are contributing to the high-quality learning and outcomes. While this is not always easy to quantify, statements from pupil and parent questionnaires clearly support this belief.
- The wide breadth of LOTC experiences offered to pupils is contributing greatly to their personal development and well being. For example, during the inspection pupils were taught on each occasion about the potential safety hazards linked to an activity and how to prevent any injury. On a recent residential week for Year 6 pupils they experienced a wide range of activities which contributed much to their personal development.

Quality of teaching and learning within LOTC

- Teachers recognise the value of LOTC and take every opportunity, as appropriate, to plan and use these activities.
- Lessons are well planned and make good use of outside environments to enhance the pupils' learning. The planning, preparation and follow-up activities for learning outside the classroom are well managed.
- In all cases pupils clearly enjoy the activities which in turn contribute to the good level of learning that is taking place. Pupils respond well to questioning and are able to explain quite clearly what they are doing.
- The LOTC activities provide a richness to the teaching and learning that is less easily captured through methods in the classroom or even the internet. For example, one Year 3 class, when using the school pond to 'pond dip', were all struck with an element of awe and wonder when one pupil collected a newt. Many pupils did not know what it was but were motivated to go and find out more when they returned to the classroom.
- Relationships are good. Pupils work safely and exercise a high amount of care when undertaking all activities. The quality of teaching and learning within LOTC activities is good.

Quality of the contribution made by LOTC to the curriculum

- You have a fundamental philosophy that LOTC plays a vital role in developing the whole child, raising standards and enhancing teaching and learning. You make sure that this pervades all aspects of the curriculum. However, this belief is not overtly stated within a curriculum or whole school policy.
- The school's programme for utilising opportunities outside the classroom is very extensive and well planned into the schemes of work for all year groups across many subject areas. Some of the best examples where LOTC is used well are seen in science, history, geography and English to name a few.
- The school has excellent links with many and varied external resources and providers. It makes very good use of resources including museums,

residential centres, external speakers, places of worship, theatres and its own school grounds.

- Pupils have access to a wide and extensive range of extra curricular and enrichment activities at lunchtimes and after school. In addition there is one week set aside each term where the whole school is involved on a themed activity, for example a multicultural Chinese week. Each of these weeks draws heavily on activities outside the classroom.

Leadership and management of LOTC

- You are the key driving force for ensuring that LOTC takes place and that the vision is shared by all staff and governors. The high value placed on this aspect of the school's life is unquestionable. Year heads and respective class teachers are responsible for the joint planning of LOTC. This ensures that all pupils in each year group are given the same experiences across the classes and that there is consistency across each cohort.
- When planning any activities the school complies with all requirements to ensure that all risks are analysed and well covered. There is a clear policy which all staff must follow when planning and conducting educational visits. All administrative procedures are thoroughly followed and in place for any activity. Parents are well informed before any visit. Governors are kept suitably informed of all visits and the Chair of Governors signs off each pre-visit form before any visit is undertaken.
- The school has thorough systems in place for tracking pupils' progress. Equally there are good systems in place for self evaluating the progress made by the school and its performance in each key area of the school's life. All staff are involved in the self evaluation process. Overall LOTC is led and managed well.

Inclusion

- This is a fully inclusive school where the needs of all the pupils are met in a caring manner.
- It is part of the school's ethos and philosophy that no pupil should be prevented from taking part in all planned activities. This includes those involving LOTC. This is seen very well through the way that the school ensures that all pupils attend the residential visits which take place in Years 5 and 6. Equally the wide range of extra curricular activities on offer ensures that there is something of interest to involve all pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included to:

- consider producing a document which confirms the whole school philosophy and reinforces the value of LOTC.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop 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

Brian Sharples
Her Majesty's Inspector