

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



04 July 2008

Mr D Dixon
Headteacher
Bowbridge Primary School
Bailey Road
Newark
Nottinghamshire
NG24 4EP

Dear Mr Dixon

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) - three year longitudinal survey.

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my final visit on 27 June to look at work in ESD.

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. This was a follow up monitoring visit which is intended to assess the progress the school has made in developing ESD throughout the school since the previous visit.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff, pupils, parents, a visitor from the Newark and Sherwood Energy Agency, scrutiny of relevant documentation, observation of two lessons and two assemblies, visits to a number of classrooms and outdoor sessions and observations of the school environment.

Since the last visit, good progress has continued to be made in developing sustainability throughout the school. The overall effectiveness is good with some aspects which are outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in ESD are good with pupils' personal development in terms of trying to live in a sustainable way being outstanding.

- All pupils are very aware of the need to lead more sustainable lives and most have a strong commitment to making this a reality.

- Pupils have a very good understanding of issues linked to climate change, global warming and the need to preserve and make better use of resources.
- Pupils are engaging more positively with the outdoor environment and learning from it. The Forest School programme reflects this well and encourages pupils to become more practically involved with their surroundings. They are genuinely concerned about the need to care for their environment to ensure their future well being.
- The involvement of pupils in the planning for the new school build and the way in which they have been informed about the progress of the building has raised greater awareness of ethical purchasing as well as a greater understanding about how buildings and their own homes can become more sustainable.
- The 'Food for Life' project develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of the need to lead healthy lifestyles. This has been further enhanced by the very real improvements to the quality of the catering in the school as well as through improved outdoor play opportunities, particularly at lunchtime. The freshly prepared food available at breakfast club, morning break and lunch improves pupils' physical well being. However, packed lunches from home do not always provide a nutritious alternative.
- There is good evidence of increasingly positive behaviour change outside the immediate school environment and especially in the home. In part, this is due to the willingness of the pupils to challenge parents and older siblings about litter, the need to save water and to switch off lights. However, there is also clear evidence that economic necessity is having an equal, if not more significant impact, in encouraging families to rethink their attitudes, particularly towards saving energy.
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils benefit from the positive conflict resolution at lunchtimes and enjoy the good opportunities to use the extensive school grounds to play collaboratively. Children are learning that they must control their behaviour and respect others.
- The use of visual noise monitors in the dining area has made this a more pleasant and calmer area to dine in. The emphasis on eating properly and using knives and forks correctly is also developing personal and social responsibility well.

Quality of teaching and learning of ESD

Insufficient ESD related lessons were observed to make a firm judgement on the quality of teaching and learning in ESD. Pupils respond best when they can engage in practical activities such as the 'Forest School initiative' or the enrichment activities provided through the 'Planet Bowbridge' programme. They particularly enjoy those opportunities which allow them to engage with real practical issues. For example, they saw the relevance of monitoring and measuring the use of water around the school in mathematics lessons. Pupils identified that their interest was better

engaged since 'they saw the point of what they were doing and could apply it to their own lives'. All pupils are encouraged to participate in the wide range of ESD activities

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the ESD curriculum is good with some outstanding features.

- Evidence from talking with pupils and scrutinising suggested that planning there remains an inconsistency in approach from some teachers. The school has recognised this and the proposed new planning framework for the new academic year is intended to encourage all teachers to identify opportunities to teach about sustainability more clearly in their planning.
- Pupils benefit from the many enrichment opportunities and special events that reflect a broad and well balanced school curriculum. For example, the 'Great Outdoors' event with its strong links to designing and making and art as well as re-using and recycling materials raised pupils' awareness of waste and efficiency as well an appreciation of the aesthetic.
- Other events such as 'Earth day' reinforced learning for pupils and made them aware of their personal carbon footprints and the realisation of the need to reduce this. It also raised the profile and importance of sustainability throughout the school, including among teachers.
- A better use of the outdoor environment has improved teaching and helped to inspire more of those 'awe and wonder' moments that make learning special.
- 'Planet Bowbridge provides an excellent platform to engage pupils practically in learning about, caring for and improving their environment. 'Radio Bowbridge' is engaging with a wider community who are entering the sustainability debate. This is also helping to disseminate positive messages and celebrate good practice.
- The use of the school garden has improved and is a source of enjoyment for many pupils. However, as yet, not all classes make the best use of this resource to engage pupils in learning about the 'living' environment.

Leadership and management of ESD

Leadership and management of ESD are outstanding.

- The leadership of the school has made sustainability central to the ethos of the school. There is a developing culture in the school which places sustainability at the centre of school life. This is enhanced by the positive environmental messages being delivered through the new school build, the increasingly distributed leadership across the school and new recruitment into the school.

- The whole school ethos is very supportive and inclusive. The participation of pupils in both observed assemblies reflected this.
- The strength of management is exemplified by the desire to push through change in the interests of the pupils and their future wellbeing. Managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and have identified that the pace of change was too slow. This resulted in identifying the need for a radical overhaul of planning to ensure that sustainability is quickly and firmly embedded in the school curriculum.
- The school is becoming very adept at ensuring that ethical purchasing and sourcing provides a positive role model for teachers, parents and pupils. The procurement policy ensures that the school practises what it preaches and has been instrumental in ensuring that the new build is as environmentally ethical as possible. The school has developed a 'Build Charter' with the contractor which provides a template for good practice.
- The new build and other capital projects such as the proposed Eco/Heritage centre in the Bailey Block provide a good opportunity to refocus priorities and ensure that sustainability truly becomes a whole school approach.
- The school continues to develop its community links and some of these initiatives are innovative in that they promote sustainability as a key focus. For example the Children's Centre, the Cultiv8 project and the Green Researchers initiative are engaging with other schools and agencies to influence decision making and spread good practice beyond the immediate school community.
- The quality of provision in the school canteen has been vastly improved and promotes sustainability well by ensuring that food is fresh, seasonal and mainly purchased locally. The alternative packed lunches which can be purchased by pupils provide excellent choice and quality.
- Teachers are benefiting from more frequent training opportunities to encourage them to engage more with learning about the need to lead more sustainable lives. For example the visit to the power station and the nearby conservation area raised teachers' awareness and engaged them with the practical activities that would enhance learning and greater creativity in their own classrooms.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- consolidating activities and planning to ensure that sustainability truly becomes a whole school initiative
- developing the global dimension and embedding learning about the wider world more firmly into the curriculum
- continuing to support teachers by providing more quality training experiences to build up their own expertise and understanding of sustainability

- continuing to develop the curriculum linked to the new planning structure to ensure a more consistent approach in all classes
- exploring the opportunities offered by the new school and community build to support and engage with parents and local people to ensure that the school becomes a real hub of the community.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ESD 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

Leszek Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools
Specialist Adviser for Geography and ESD