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Mr Alan Gray
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Dear Mr Gray

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Impact of Extended Services

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 and 14th November to look at the impact of extended services on children and young people.

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 scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of activities. In addition, interviews were carried out with students, staff, parents, governors, and representatives from external agencies and the local authority.

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

Achievement and standards

Standards in relation to curricular enrichment activities are good. The activities promote achievement and contribute much to the ethos of the school. Workshops, drop-in sessions and subject related clubs assist in raising achievement, particularly for those students targeted by the school. There is a distinct link between the rich range of activities and raising students' aspirations, general behaviour, attendance and the social benefits of students building friendships across year groups. A very high proportion of students is involved in extra curricular activities.

The school has effectively targeted study support activities on specific groups of students including those with learning difficulties, the gifted and talented or those who are showing signs of not reaching their predicted level. This is leading to improvements in their performance. Aspects of this targeted support are particularly sensitively handled, for example occasional girls' only groups, led by female staff, which have enabled some girls to improve their academic performance.

Mentoring by school staff has been thoughtfully and successfully applied. Students interviewed were able to articulate how mentoring has assisted them in their academic progress and with behavioural or social issues which had been impeding their learning.

Notably, some older students take a leadership role in, for example, the orchestra, dance groups, community sports leadership award, and fund raising. The young people who lead in these situations do so with particular confidence, enthusiasm and in many instances displayed marked skills in the subject area. This approach has considerable benefits for those taking the lead role and for students on the receiving end.

Information sessions and workshops for parents have helped them understand more clearly the academic expectations on their children and how they can provide additional support.

Quality of provision

The quality of extended provision is outstanding. The well established homework club is a model of good practice. It provides for some 20 to 50 students three times per week and has shaped itself into a club where students can either complete homework tasks prior to going home, receive guidance from learning support assistants or use ICT. It is one of the measures which contributes to the recent improvement in results. In a few instances the homework club is used to enable parents to work late.

Specialist arts status has augmented extended school activity well with increased arts based activity and outreach work. It has helped build the capacity of community arts groups. Arts status allows for flexible contracts for staff to enable them to plan their work in the evenings and other times.

The building is put to extremely good use, managers are positive and community minded and the resource is clearly a shared one. Adjacent infant and junior pupils access specialist secondary teachers as well as benefiting from the extended facilities.

Leadership and management of extended services

Leadership and management is good. The school has managed well the plethora of relationships which exist with outside agencies, including education welfare, community safety and Connexions, and plays a pivotal role in ensuring early identification and a quick response to the needs of challenging students and their parents. Agencies are quickly drawn in and letters despatched or phone calls made to parents regarding behaviour and attendance.

Attention has been given to considering the impact of extended services. A range of data has been analysed, from attendance at extra curricular activities to 'value added' when students have received additional support. This is a good and valid attempt at measuring impact. An Ofsted inspection in 2005 recommended action to improve the performance of more able students and extended school developments have assisted in this respect. The extended schools notion enjoys considerable support from staff and Governors.

The local authority provides support through an extended schools co-ordinator who covers six schools. It operates under the title of NEXUS. NEXUS is proactive, promotes the work of extended schools well and signposts them and the community to the core offer. However, in common with the school, it is less clear that NEXUS has fully analysed the needs of all potential users including adults. The planning and monitoring of the art specialism provides a model which could usefully be applied to general extended activities.

Inclusion

Sandringham's strengths lie in the early and detailed identification of special needs and the emphasis placed on pastoral support, the engagement of parents and the full involvement of all young people in the life of the school. This has had a positive impact on the performance of more vulnerable students as well as those working below their potential.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- in conjunction with NEXUS, implementing a more thorough and considered approach to community needs assessment and engagement.

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

Tony Gallagher
Her Majesty's Inspector

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