

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



17 September 2010

Ms C McIvor
Headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Anns Hill Road
Gosport
PO12 3NB

Dear Ms McIvor

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: the quality and impact of partnership provision in schools for children in service families

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 13 and 14 September 2010 to look at the school's contribution to the quality of provision and partnerships for children who are in families of service personnel.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of partnerships, including the quality of the partnerships between schools and agencies and between schools and parents, I looked at how effective the partnerships are in improving children's personal well-being and learning. I also considered the nature of the support given to these children, including those children in the most vulnerable circumstances, or those who have a particular special educational need and/or disability, and the arrangements to ensure the continuity of provision during their move in and out of your school.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: meetings with you and other staff, parents and pupils; discussions with the school's special needs coordinator; and a review of the school's documentation and pupils' achievement.

The school's contribution to the quality of provision and partnerships for children who are in families of service personnel is good.

Key features

- Almost all service pupils in this school come from Naval families. Most families do not change location so there is little movement of service pupils in and out of the school. Hence, the vast majority of these pupils start school in the Reception Year and stay until they move into secondary school after completing Year 6. Frequent transitions between schools are therefore not a significant issue here.
- The school makes every effort to follow up on records for any pupils who arrive with little or no information from their previous schools, including where these are local transitions. All new pupils settle into the school very quickly as there is a rapid identification and analysis of their needs by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo). The local authority is involved quickly as necessary and the most appropriate support is identified and provided. The impact of this support is thoroughly tracked and evaluated by the SENCo to judge its effectiveness.
- Few pupils transfer into the school from service children's schools in other countries. Where this has happened, pupils have been supported by detailed transfer information. For example, one pupil came with a 'rainbow pack' that detailed academic performance as well as other aspects of school life. In the same way, on the few occasions where pupils do move to other schools, including those in other countries, the school sends a similar complete pack of information on the pupil's performance and other relevant information, such as their contribution to school life.
- The school liaises closely with the local authority and Navy support services as appropriate. This helps to meet the individual needs of pupils as they arise. Staff are well trained and understand the needs of all pupils including those from service families. For example, where a parent is absent for a long period of time, staff respond flexibly and support the pupil in the most appropriate way.
- The school places considerable emphasis on supporting all pupils' emotional and personal development and uses several complementary programmes. One successful example is the appointment of an 'emotional first aider' (EFA) to provide early intervention and support for pupils. This person is much appreciated by the service pupils, especially if they are separated from a parent for a long period or if they are going through stressful family situations. Other more structured and focused input comes from the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme supported by Hampshire local authority. Service pupils have benefited from the long-term support that this provides.
- The school is part of a local education improvement partnership where schools and other local agencies are working together on shared goals to improve outcomes for young people based on the local Hampshire children and young persons' plan. This work would be enhanced by a focus on the needs of service families as several of the schools in the partnership contain service pupils.

- At present, the governing body is in a period of transition; there are several vacancies and most other governors are new to the role. There are no governors who represent service families or maintain oversight of provision for those families.
- Pupil performance is tracked carefully and outcomes are evaluated. They show that all are making good progress and achievement is good. This information is not used to highlight the performance of service pupils as a distinct group. Any pupil, regardless of background, who is not making enough progress, is rapidly identified and appropriate support is provided.
- Service parents are very positive about the care that the school takes of their children. They are happy that the school clearly understands the particular issues faced by service families and that it can respond flexibly to individual needs.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop the work with children and their parents who are in families of service personnel.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector