

# Oxfordshire County Council



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T. R. P. Brighthouse, M.A.  
Chief Education Officer

My reference	Your reference	Please ask for	Date
SCH/JFT/JL		Mr. J.F. Thorne	22nd March, 1982

Dear Mrs. O'Brien,

As you know the Members' Evaluation Panel received your report at a meeting on the 2nd November 1981 and you were able to be present and speak to it. I am writing now to thank you and your staff for the very considerable time and care you have given to its production and I should be grateful if you would pass to your Governors the thanks of the Members for the time they took in discussing the report with you and my officers.

I would like now to refer in some detail to various issues raised in the report and to identify some basic points which affect the continued happy and sound development of your school. As you know Mr. Thorne follows up a sample of the evaluation reports with visits to the schools after the Members' Panel have considered them. This can be of considerable help to us and in particular of course we can see what progress has been made in the development of new ideas which have come from all your work leading up to the report. In your case you had gone to the trouble of so arranging things that Mr. Thorne could talk not only to you but to all your staff and this he enjoyed. He would certainly wish me to add that the choice of schools for a follow-up is fairly random and the motives you suspected were quite unjustified! This said I should stress that you have reinforced our belief that the thorough discussions and preparations that took place before the report was written are indeed the essential core of the self-evaluation process and this exercise very clearly in your case led to lively discussion while showing up good practice and pointing to future developments. Your meeting with Mr. Thorne did underline certain developments and I will arrange for the appropriate members of the Advisory Team to give you assistance in the follow-up work which you have now started.

## Aims and Objectives

The aims of each school differ to some extent in scope and emphasis but there is a large measure of common ground. Your statement was perhaps the most succinct I have seen but I must acknowledge that it covered what I would regard as the essential points. I would however suggest that a more detailed exposition of objectives would probably be of help, both to your present staff and to future members, at the very least as a yardstick against which to evaluate your work and future developments.

## Factual Background

Under this heading we usually consider matters concerning the buildings, problems of capitation and such things as the amount of help you have from other agencies. You raised little on this in your report and I think it sufficient to say that it is very evident that the open plan style of building is one which you favour and put to good use in the development of your work. Such a plan can lead to difficulties, but in your case there is clearly an emphasis on consideration for others and care for the environment, so that the design of the building seems to cause no embarrassment between one teaching group and another. Your Governors are not the only ones who are very appreciative of the good manners of the children.

## Care and Guidance Arrangements

The closeness with which you and your staff work together provides a firm basis from which to monitor the progress and needs of individual children. The results appear to be the successful screening of children with learning or behavioural needs and close liaison with parents about their children. You seem very successfully to combine the academic and pastoral roles.

## Curricular Arrangements

The details provided in your report indicate that there is care and attention to the development of basic skills, literacy and numeracy. In addition there appear to be well established links between the different age groups so that the early stages of learning are carefully built upon. The Members' Panel noted with pleasure the growth of scientific investigation based upon first hand experience which is now being developed with the infants and lower juniors. I have noted that you are about to introduce a new scheme of work in this field and I will arrange for the specialist adviser to visit you. I will also see if I can give you some supplementary capitation in order to ensure a sound start for this new scheme. I have noted too that you are reviewing the organisation of group work and are also considering the need to revise your scheme of work for mathematics, although you are confident that you have "knitted together" three schemes quite successfully to this stage. Here again I understand that you would welcome some assistance from the Adviser for Mathematics and this too I will arrange.

As you are aware, areas of the curriculum, such as Music, which you feel cannot be fully met within your staffing establishment, do depend on improvements in the pupil/teacher ratios and at the present time with financial constraints it does not seem possible that such improvements will be forthcoming. You will of course know that in the course of the last year I have recommended certain modest improvements to the Committee and they would welcome them; their ability to introduce all or some of them will depend on the budget as a whole.

## Pupil Progress

You clearly have an established system for testing reading ages, monitoring progress and generally keeping a close check on each child. You supplement formal testing with constant referral and discussion between members of staff so that the results of tests can be interpreted in the light of each teacher's knowledge of his or her pupils. You are quick to change and adapt to the needs of an individual child.

## Staff Development

The Members noted the points you made about the difficulty of accessibility to in-service courses for teachers in the Faringdon area. I think we have made it clear in turn that the facilities at the Swindon Teachers' Centre are available to Oxfordshire staff and in addition we hope that it may be possible for us to develop a Teachers' Resource Centre on the Elms site. I appreciate of course the constraints put upon small schools by the limited size of their establishment and their geographical position. Having said this, however, in-service work between primary schools in this area is developing and has taken the form of a concentration term by term on various areas of the curriculum. Thus I understand that work on Art is currently being followed up by work in the Science field. I would hope that the links with the secondary school could be extended to work on the curriculum and I welcome your readiness to explore the possibilities of staff exchange in order to encourage this work.

## The School and the Community

The Members noted in particular how much the school has become an integral part of village life not only as a building which can be used for social activities but as a living body which has established effective links with all sectors of the local community. The Friends of the School are very obviously most supportive and I have in part noted above the cooperative work which is developing between the primary schools in the area. In the same way I shall encourage the building up of links with the secondary school not only in the curricular field, which again I have touched upon above, but also in the transfer of records and the follow up of information on former primary school pupils. I am sure that the good will is there on all sides. In general I should add here that while for obvious reasons there are limitations on the amount of supply cover we can give I am prepared to authorise a certain amount in order to encourage in-service training in general and staff exchange in particular.

In summary I would say that your projections of pupil numbers look healthy, you have the confidence of your Governors and parents, you enjoy considerable experience and a variety of talents amongst your staff who in turn offer children some range of additional activities while discussion has made it clear that you are ready to monitor your work all the time and are actively considering new ideas and encouraging cooperation between the schools. I am grateful to you for all the hard work you and your staff are doing and wish you further success.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'T. Kelly', written over a horizontal line.