

Community Cohesion

Extended Schools – Hackney Free & Parochial CE School

Hackney Free and Parochial School is one of only two 'full-service' extended schools in Hackney and the first Hackney school to achieve the International School Award. Extended Schools status was awarded in 2004 and we received a Quality in Extended Schools Award in 2008. We achieved the International School Award in 2007.

Through our full service status, we have offered diverse and innovative learning experiences for members of the wider community. Our underlying rationale, the variety of activities we offer and the range of partnerships we have established have all contributed to our success. As part of our provision, we organise, manage and promote both free and subsidised activities and we facilitate lettings of the building to various community groups.

From the beginning, we decided that effective management of our full service provision was necessary to achieve success. Our designated full service co-ordinator has been a driving force, supported closely by a member of the senior leadership team. Through our extended schools work, we have been conscious to focus not only on our own school wide concerns and imperatives, but also those of the wider local communities. This led to meaningful consultation with the wider community and has provided opportunities for the involvement of communities, parents and students in decision-making.

We have successfully introduced a wide range of projects that specifically aim to promote community cohesion. These include inter-generational family learning programmes such as our 'Stir it up' cookery classes, talent shows, family 'keep fit' classes, ESOL classes and parent and child fishing course, amongst others. We were also highly commended for our successful hosting of the 2009 Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender History Month launch. We hosted the National launch of LGBT History Month as part of a series of anti-bullying events and were the first school nationally to host this high profile LGBT event.

We see ourselves as central to our local community and this philosophy has informed a number of initiatives. We provide a wide variety of opportunities to extend individual skills and experience; we currently offer free youth worker training, community sports leaders' award, first aid courses and food hygiene courses. We also support members of the community to improve their career opportunities by providing free training to achieve accreditation as a Teaching Assistant. We offer opportunities for children and adults from across Hackney to participate in activities including our very popular unicycle group. Our thriving Afro-Reggae group successfully achieved a Princess Diana Memorial award and, locally, a Trailblazer award. We are also a pilot school for 'Championship Pledges' in the build up to 2012 and all our Key Stage 3 students have made public pledges in preparation for the Olympics. As a result of our work, we have received a number of awards, including most recently the Eco-Schools Award (2010).

We are a hub school for extended schools provision within Hackney and, as a result, we host many community events throughout the year that target specific groups represented in the wider community. We provide opportunities for cluster activities and play schemes to provide physical activity and learning support during school holidays, an invaluable resource for the community.

We offer free community 'keep fit' activities during evenings and weekends. We also provide family 'keep fit' activities and free access to the gym. We have established community partnerships to offer accommodation for popular programmes including 'Weightwatchers'. All provision aims ultimately to meet the needs of the community we serve and build community cohesion.

Through our links with Cluster F, we offer opportunities for children and young people from one nursery, three children's centres, eleven primary schools and three secondary schools to benefit for our extended schools activities. During school holidays we offer such activities as circus skills workshops, museum trips, climbing wall training and cycle maintenance (working in collaboration with outside agencies including the Metropolitan Police and the Mile End Climbing Club). We also provide a mini bus service for local community sports fixtures.

We are Hackney's hub school for the School Sports Partnership. The partnership is based on our premises and is overseen by a member of the senior leadership team. We have links with 79 primary schools and 9 secondary schools across the borough and aim to support partner institutions in providing quality PE provision which achieves a 5 hour offer. As a Specialist Sports College we run activities for the community, including free Basketball sessions three times a week which are open to young people from across the borough up to the age of 18. During this academic year, our new PE Technician, currently in training for the Olympics, has delivered sports programmes at three local primary schools as part of their OoSHL provision to further develop our community and Specialism work.

We work actively with partner institutions and local and regional stakeholders to ensure effective provision. A recent audit of the key stakeholders within the school and wider community has evidenced the internal, local, regional, national and global network links the school has developed. Our aim is to achieve high levels of multi-agency working. Although our work with outside agencies has required a considerable investment of time and understanding, we have begun to reap the rewards. Where most successful, as with our Health Hut, we have benefited in terms of improving information-sharing procedures, targeting services appropriately, enhancing access to services and co-ordinating approaches to vulnerable children and their families. The Health Hut has effectively worked with external groups to promote student, family and community well-being. We are very proud of our extensive work with a range of local partners to promote environmental education and are currently the only school in the country to have achieved the '4 Green Flags' environmental award and are currently working towards our fifth 'Green Flag'. As an Anglican school, we have also benefited greatly from our strong connections with the local church and the support of Father Rob Wickham, our local vicar and Vice Chair of the Governing Body.

We feel strongly that, to have real impact, we should build on tangible success in the school and extend this to community provision. We were commended in our recent Ofsted report (October 2009) for our outstanding student leadership provision; we have subsequently established a Hackney Youth Leadership Academy for the borough which runs weekly out of school hours to share our outstanding practice. The Academy enables students aged 11-18 to gain a variety of accreditations including the Duke of Edinburgh Award, BELA, Sports Leaders, Introduction to Youth Work and First Aid. Our accredited leadership course is supported by training provided by Team Hackney. Also, following recognition for 10% improvement in GCSE exam grades A* - C, on Saturday 27th February 2010 we will launch our supplementary school. We will provide additional learning opportunities for primary and secondary school students across Hackney.

Running initially at weekends and extending to evenings and school holidays, the supplementary school will provide additional classes in English, Maths and Science. Having completed a rigorous selection process, we are confident that we have employed staff of the highest calibre who will improve student confidence and increase attainment across the borough.

We were the first school in Hackney to gain the full International School Award for academic years 2007 to 2010. Led by our International School co-ordinator, our good practice has been recognised in terms of the international dimension which influences the taught curriculum and extended schools activities. In recognition of our strong international ethos, our co-ordinator is now part of the International School Award assessment panel, responsible for assessing applications by schools from across the UK. We have examined a variety of themes, including rivers of the world, global citizenship, Chicago, celebrating Black History, Anne Frank and Multi Cultural awareness. Students and members of the wider community have gained a new and exciting global perspective and benefited from their involvement in collaborative projects with communities from across the world. The residents of Hackney belong to a culturally diverse community, our international dimension has helped to widen experiences even further, enabling participants to communicate, collaborate and share their experiences and achievements with communities in countries as diverse as Spain, France, South Africa, Kenya and Jamaica. Most notably, two members of staff recently had the opportunity to visit Cape Town to share good practice and two members the local community are given the opportunity to live and work in Kenya each summer, accompanied by a member of our senior leadership team who leads the annual expedition.

The development of our full service extended school provision has been one of a range of initiatives that have been running concurrently nationally and locally. In response to our simultaneous engagement in a range of initiatives (including the implementation of the Every Child Matters agenda, the Children Act 2004 and the Children's Plan 2007), we have ensured that we have taken a wider strategic approach to planning and implementation. This strategic approach has left us optimistic about our capacity to continue to make a real difference to the communities we serve.

Indeed, our internal and external quality assurance would suggest that our provision is having a substantial impact. We are recipients of the Learning Trust Educators' Award 2010 for excellence in extended schools. This award celebrates our work "engaging with the wider community to offer personal development, social, sporting or other opportunities for pupils and their families beyond the classroom.". We are also recipients of commendations from regulating bodies including Quality in Extended Schools (QES), Quality in Study Support (QiSS) and Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP). We also have considerable anecdotal evidence of positive outcomes from our full service provision. These include examples of raised attainment, increased student, parental and community engagement with learning and growing trust and support between families and the school. This suggests that longer-term and more wide-ranging outcomes may indeed be possible, with indications that our full service provision might potentially intervene to break established cycles of disadvantage across the borough.