

PRIMARY Teachers

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The breakfast club

WORDS GREG HADFIELD PICTURES ANDREW HASSON

HIGH-QUALITY CHILDCARE IS CENTRAL TO THE EXTENDED SERVICES THAT WILL BE OFFERED BY ALL PRIMARY SCHOOLS BY 2010. YEAR-ROUND PROVISION CAN HAVE FAR-REACHING BENEFITS.

It is precisely 8am and first to arrive is six-year-old Kieron. As usual, his mother leaves him safely inside Moulsecomb Primary School before catching the bus to her part-time job in the city centre. Within 10 minutes, another dozen or so children have joined him. By the time lessons begin, the number will have risen to 30 or more. Welcome to the most popular breakfast club in Brighton.

The meal is a simple one: fresh orange juice, a bowl of cereal, and as much toast as they can eat. The children sit in twos and threes at the handful of tables that occupy the centre of the room. Elsewhere, there is a well-worn sofa and a miniature pool table. Nobody uses these, because everybody is far too busy eating - or talking, and laughing. It is an overcast Monday morning, but another week has got off to a bright start.

Between operating toasters and pouring out milk, Dana Gutsell listens to children as they queue to tell small

FACTFILE

All children will be able to access extended services by 2010:

- High-quality "wraparound" childcare from 8am to 6pm, throughout the year;
- Varied activities, such as homework clubs and study support, sport, music tuition, dance and drama, arts and crafts, special interest clubs, and visits to museums and galleries;
- Parenting support and family learning sessions;
- Swift and easy referral to specialist support services, such as speech therapy, child and adolescent mental health services, and family support services;
- Wider community access to ICT, sports and arts facilities.

but important tales of what they got up to at the weekend, why a friend isn't coming to school, what they're looking forward to, or anything else that comes to mind. "It's much better for the children to start the day with a healthy meal," she says. "But it's also good for them to have someone to talk to. And if I wasn't here, they might be left just hanging around in the playground if their mums have to leave home early."

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Dana is a former pupil of the school, as are her two teenage children. It is a pattern repeated in many other families on an estate of severe deprivation and high unemployment. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average; the number with learning difficulties and disabilities is also exceptionally high. Nevertheless, an Ofsted report concluded the school is "increasingly effective," giving top marks for the outstanding way it worked with others to promote the wellbeing of learners.

The breakfast club, resulting in improved punctuality and attendance, is part of a bigger picture. A toddler group meets twice a week, with music and dance sessions, while an on-site creche is open whenever the school is open.

The creche is a crucial component, says Lucy Rayner, Moulsecoomb's school and community development worker, responsible for coordinating extended services: "When I started here six years ago, there was no positive reason for parents to come into the school. If ever they did engage, it was always for a negative reason, either because there was a problem with their child, or because they wanted to complain about something. All that has changed."

Now parents are in school throughout the day, whether it's dropping in for a coffee and a chat at the weekly Community Morning get-together or learning how to cook a healthy meal that they can take home for a nominal charge of £1. Other activities include preparation for national tests in literacy and numeracy, English for



speakers of other languages, use of school computers, and a pre-nursery Moving On group for parents of children ready to make the transition from the neighbouring Sure Start children's centre.

Lucy says: "Parents have lots of really good reasons to come and, if they have younger children, they know there is always a creche. Most importantly, the children see that school must be good because their mum also comes in and learns or has fun."

That certainly applies to the art group. Taught by a self-employed sculptor, it is one of the school's most popular and longlasting initiatives. In a series of public art projects, a dozen or so mothers have combined to build a Celtic spiral on an ancient quarry site and constructed a dragon from a fallen beech tree on the South Downs.

What began in a classroom, has truly spread its wings and made a mark on the local landscape.

IN A SECRET GARDEN

At the edge of Deadman Woods nestles Moulsecoomb's Forest Garden. It's a short walk for teacher Hilary Bryan, just beyond the council blocks and the rundown railway station. But it's a million miles from the daily lives of her class of seven-year-olds.

Together, they have created an orchard, complete with storytelling area and wildlife pond. This term, they planted garlic and now they are harvesting the bulbs so they can make garlic bread.

None of this would happen without extended services - and Warren Carter, a gardener who has transformed one of one of Brighton's most historic allotment sites.

"This garden works wonders," Warren says. "The transformation of the kids is amazing. It really does bring out the best in all of them."

RESOURCES

Teachernet
www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/extendedschools

Every Child Matters
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Training and Development Agency for Schools
www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/extendedschools.aspx

Ofsted
www.ofsted.gov.uk/assets/4158.doc

Teachers TV
www.teachers.tv/video/363

TEACHERS TV

Sunday, June 24
6.15am School Matters - Every Child Matters The experiences of two different schools
For full listings, turn to page 28

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Share your views about extended schools.
Email: feedback@primaryteachersmagazine.co.uk