

Investing in Children Membership Award™

Re-evaluation of ISP School - Battle



Introduction

Situated on the lovely setting of Glengorse Estate in Battle, East Sussex, ISP school provides specialist education for 7-18-year olds with social, emotional, and mental health difficulties (SEMH), communication and interaction, cognition, and learning needs.

The school offers a safe, calm and nurturing learning environment in which pupils are supported to reach their potential. Their holistic, therapeutic approach promotes positive relationships, self-discipline, self-esteem, and resilience, enabling pupils to make excellent progress in line with their learning needs and individual starting points.

For the purpose of this re-evaluation, I visited the school and met with all of the children by experiencing a morning of school life. I was able to sit in on a community meeting and visit various classes to speak with children. I would like to say a special thanks to JJ, a year 11 child who came in especially to be my tour guide.

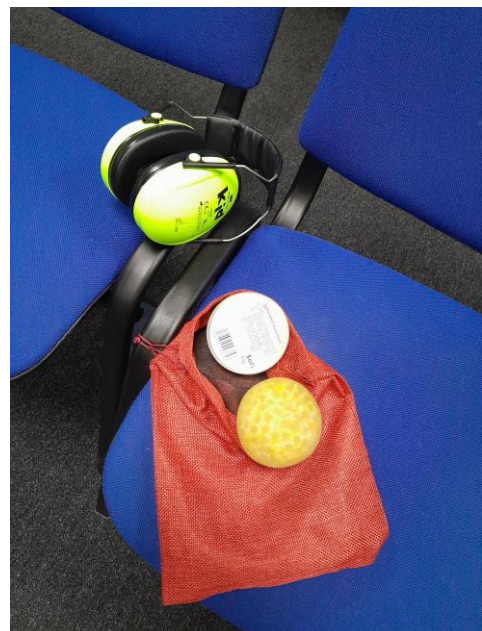
Evidence of Dialogue and Change

Evidence of Dialogue resulting in Change from Children and Young People

Community Meetings

There continues to be whole school community meetings in which adults and children meet four times per day to offer a safe, secure, emotionally holding environment. During my visit I was able to attend the morning meeting to observe how they run and the ways children engage in dialogue through these. An example of this is visible through the range of seating arrangements in the room. Each child chooses where they want to sit and the choice of seating. Some children had chairs with arms, some without, one had a bean bag and another had a rocking chair. ***“We choose what seat we want.”***

“On each chair we have a bag with sensory things in... our choice.” A teacher also said ‘*not only do the pupils have one, I have one too!*’





“At our community meetings, we can bring up anything we want to discuss or what’s happening that day. We have them 4 times a day.”

“You have the option to have a sensory bag... even some adults have them!”

“Anyone can say something.”

“Children can run the meetings.”

Another child raised at the meeting that their karting trip and taster day collides. The adults said they would look into it so that he didn’t miss out on either.

Whole School Assemblies

Children have led a whole school assembly and had individual and small group meetings. ***“We can do assemblies and talk about anything we want.”***

“Anyone can just say something!”

Two children made a power point on being a therian and what it is. ***“They presented it to the whole school.”***

School Lunches

All of the children took part in a democracy session around lunches which enabled them to choose a variety of sandwich fillers. As a result, more fillers are now available such as chicken and bacon, coronation chicken and egg mayonnaise.

The children told me: ***“We didn’t like that the sandwiches were covered in cling film as it made them smell horrible. They changed it so they are now in tin foil because we asked!”***

“You get to choose what you want for lunch and if there isn’t anything on the menu that you like, you can ask. Like once, I asked for Peanut butter sandwiches and they gave me that!”

“There is a two-week rolling programme to choose from. You can also suggest things to be added.”

“They always make sure there is something for you to eat.”

“I like that we get to have squash and hot drinks.”

Breakfast

Everyday breakfast is on offer. There is a free flow system in operation within the kitchen on a morning which I was able to see.

“There are loads of things to choose from. You can ask for anything you want, if they don’t have it, they will get it for you.”

“You can suggest something if they don’t have it.... There is loads of choice from what people have asked for.”

“Either everyone in the class comes to the kitchen or one person will take all the orders and come make it.”

PE

Termly PE is led by the children’s thoughts which are discussed to identify what they can access. ***“We all get a say and can suggest ideas.”***

“In up-grade we do kick boxing. 95% of us wanted to do it so we got to choose.”

During my visit, one young person chose not to go to up-grade but to practice on the drums for an event in the summer.

One to One reflection

Children are able throughout the day to decide on when they need to speak with the adults.

“There is always someone to speak to if you need it.”

“You just have to say to an adult; can I chat to you when you are free.”

End of Term Trips

Children support the head in deciding what trips will take place at the end of each term. All the young people told me that they have been involved in this process and that they voted on which trip they wanted to go on from three possible suggestions.

“We had three choices and had to pick one.”

“We all get a choice.”

“It was between Knock Hatch, Chessington and Legoland. I asked for Knock Hatch so that was on the list but Chessington got the most votes so we are all going there.”

Accommodating needs

When new children or adults join the school, a discussion takes place to look at seating arrangements within the community meetings. The plan looks at accommodating everyone's needs.

“You get a choice on where you want to sit and if you aren't happy then you say and they will try and sort it.”

Tutor Groups

Children join the school and mainly go into GSH tutor group. As a community they then discuss what tutor group they will then join or if they prefer to stay in the same tutor group.

Curriculum

If children struggle or find a particular subject triggering, the school works with them to determine a curriculum that works for them. They also have the flexibility to shape the topics they are involved in during lessons. One of the rooms within the school had been completely decorated as a secret garden room following their involvement in an English lesson. The same class are now reading the Secret Code book and came up with the new room idea of the Brighton Pavilion. The author of the book is also coming in once the room is complete. All the pupil's ideas are used to make the decorations for the room and this was visible during my visit.

“We have a voice in our lessons. One time my usual teacher wasn't here so I asked if it was ok to go to the kitchen to draw on some cups instead. That's what I did!”

“If you are struggling, you can just say and they will help you or you can suggest something else to do.”

Josh told me about when he was choosing his options. ***“When I was choosing my year 9 options, me and Oscar wanted to do triple science so that has happened.”***

Another young person, Phoebe wants to become a health and social care teacher so she chose 2 related subjects.

The school promotes independent learning. Kai told me how he went to up-grade but didn't like it. ***“They changed it for me so now I have a choice and choose to do practice papers in English or History.”***

“We get a lot of freedom to discuss the timetable. One class had an issue with the timetable so something was done about it.”

In Land-based studies, pupils in KS3 and 4 choose areas of interest/subjects such as 3 have chosen fishing, 2 animal care and some outdoor construction.

During the cooking lesson I visited two children who were busy cooking. Two things were on the menu; bubble and squeak and toad in the hole. One of the children said that they didn't want to make either of them so was making a cake instead, (their choice)

Kerris told me: ***"I've asked to make spaghetti bolognese and going to be making it soon. I've also made cakes in the past that I've asked for."***

"Cooking is my favourite lesson so I get to do it every Thursday and on Tuesdays and Thursdays I get to go to 1066 which is a trampoline/gymnastics centre."

Tutor Time

As part of tutor time, pupils are involved in deciding what they want to do during this time. One class have recently chosen to read during tutor time.

"We picked Inspector Calls and for the tutor to read it to us!"

Another class I visited, the tutor was reading *'The Hobbit'* to the four pupils in the class. At the end of reading the young people spoke about how they would like to change what they do in tutor time.

"It would be better if we read every other day, say on a Tuesday and Thursday and the other days we could do something different"

Everyone agreed, including the teacher and this will happen from now on.

Another way that pupils have made a change in this class was through the decoration and displays.

"Skye brought in all the ducks you can see around the room" (They were even on the ceiling).

"Another voice is the Otter!" (Pointing to it in the room) ***"E brought it in to offer emotional support for me."***

Haircuts

Some children requested haircuts so permission was obtained from parent/carers. A qualified barber who is a progress engagement guide offers an afternoon session, cutting and styling hair. Kyle was able to tell me about his haircut.

"I had a haircut, I used to have long hair! She let me hold the clippers, feel and hear them. I said how I wanted my hair!"



Another young person said: ***“I’ve never had a haircut but I know other people who have!”***

Music Room

JJ showed me the very impressive music rooms and I was able to listen to one of the songs he has made.

“I’ve made a few songs... I was able to make some beats and this is one of them I was able to make!” “I am on our You Tube channel as well”

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM4OgTiEtG7YoObcRfnfEw>

“You can come in here and make music.”

Staff Recruitment

I spoke with Caroline (Headteacher) regarding children’s involvement in staff recruitment. Caroline informed me that due to the therapeutic model the school has, they only allow adults who have completed a first interview with Caroline and her Deputy Head: Amelia (and been successful at first interview) to come into the school to meet the children in a community meeting and to be toured by Caroline and children. It is at this time that children have the opportunity to share their thoughts and feedback on candidates.

Games room, Clubs and the School Grounds

There are break out rooms within the school that children can access during breaks as well as the beautiful grounds that they can go in. One thing that children enjoyed at forest school was the tree swing and they requested another in the school grounds at the front of the school. Following this request, Caroline (Head Teacher) spoke with the proprietor to see if this was possible as the children wanted this in an area that would not usually be used by the children, there is now a swing available.



“You can go to clubs at lunch time or just outside. We have lots of clubs that we asked for such as computer club, Monopoly, arts club every Thursday. We also have the playground equipment.” (highlighted in last year’s report).

“We used to have War Hammer club but people asked for a change so now we have table top club as people are really into Monopoly.”



“We also asked for art club, which is on once a week!”



Work Experience

Everyone in the school has the opportunity to complete a work experience placement. Children are asked areas of work they are interested in and matched with an employer. Should any child want to change their placement, they can by expressing their wishes to an adult.

During my visit, a child spoke to Caroline regarding their work experience and requested a change. By the end of my visit, the staff team had already been discussing it and a potential new placement that could be offered. This was great to see.

“I got to choose my work experience and Cara set it up for me. I’ve just started working on a farm.”

“I’ve asked if I can change and they suggested the Animal Sanctuary.” (which the child seemed really happy about)

Dojo rewards

Throughout the year, children can receive Dojo points for various things. All of which were chosen by previous children and adults. At the start of this year one child worked out mathematically, how many points children could get throughout the term and year to create a catalogue of rewards for set amount of points. These were displayed in each class room and something the pupils enjoy working towards and achieving.

“You get Dojo points and when you get to a certain level, you get to choose your reward.”

Summer Festival

Kai told me that on the 18th July the school are having a Summer Festival. Pupils have been involved in the planning and running of the event.

“There are four of us going to perform four songs. We have picked the four songs; Star Man, Trees, Paranoid and Drain You.”

“I love music and going to be playing the drums. Gareth the music teacher showed me drum beats so now I have even got my own drums at home.” I asked Kai if he played the drums before he attended the school and he replied no.

“Other pupils have different roles at the festival which they have chosen themselves.”

Safety Plans

Children are involved in their own safety plans. JJ said:

“I was involved in changing my own plan.”

Child Survey

Every year a child survey takes place where children have the opportunity to comment on the school. Last year’s feedback showed that children would often receive positive slips electronically that were sent to parent/carers. Feedback raised that children did not get to see them with being electronic and suggested postcards instead. These are now in place.

Additional Comments

I asked some of the children to describe in a few words what the school means to them and was told the following:

“It’s a very good school!”

“I think it’s good the way it is.”

“The school is perfect.”

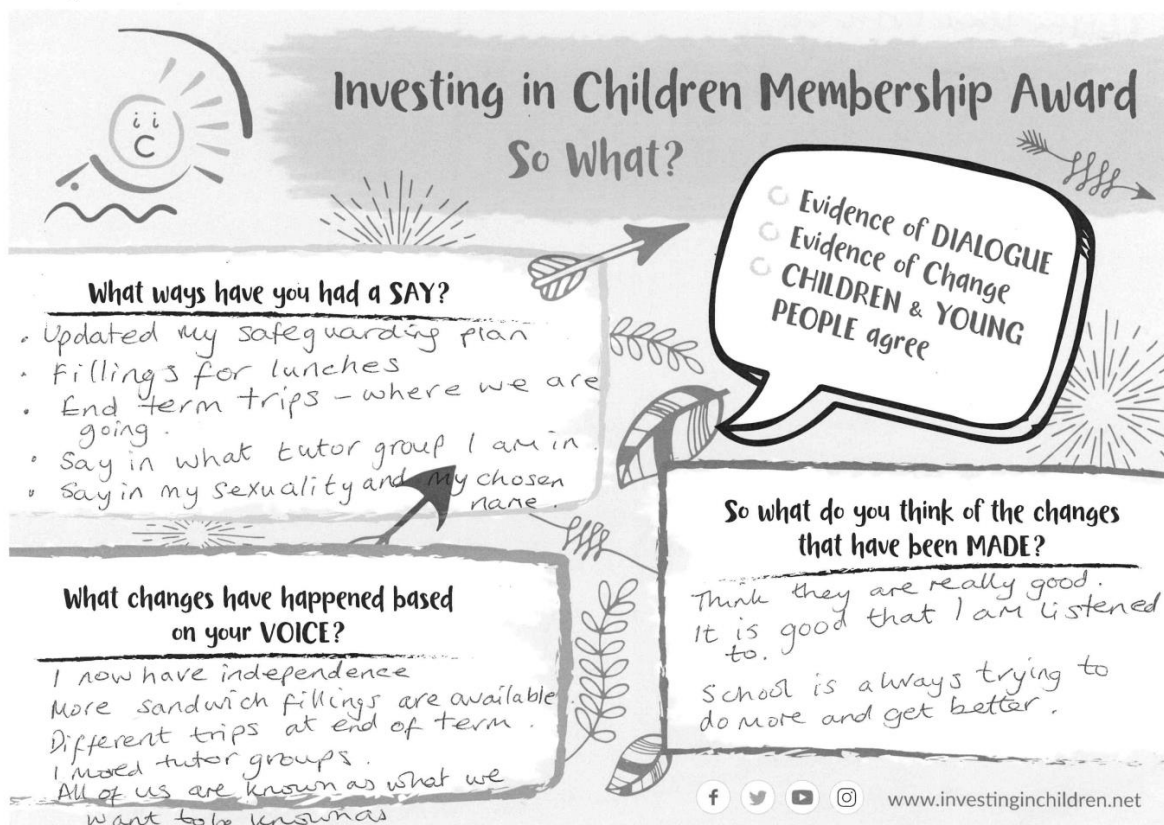
“I’m fairly new to the school, I’ve only been here since Christmas but it’s way better than my other school. In my old school you were told what to do but here you can just be yourself and no-one really judges you.”

“Before I never went to school but here I haven’t missed a day since I started!”

“The school has helped me a lot as I missed a lot learning wise. The way they teach makes it fun to learn. Like in Science they will take you outside to do experiments.”

Additional evidence of Dialogue resulting in Change provided by the organisation

The following evidence was sent by the school and I would like to capture it within my report:



Recommendations

Recommendations from children and young people

Pupil Advocates – Kai expressed that one of his friends did not feel confident speaking out when an issue/situation had arisen and that he was the only person that his friend would confide and speak to. A discussion took place regarding Kai acting as an advocate for his friend when situations arise. ***“It would be good for pupils to be advocates for others.”***

All of the other children said they wouldn’t change anything about the school.

“It’s perfect the way it is.”

liC recommendations

I would like to suggest the school implements a ‘You said – We did’ wall within the school so that pupils and staff can capture the ways individuals have a voice that leads to a change. This could be child led and a great way to capture evidence for liC Membership.

Conclusion

The school are extremely passionate about ensuring children’s voice is heard in every aspect of school life. This was clear to see during my visit and all of the children were able to give ways they have had a voice and made changes based on this.

Children have the opportunity to shape every decision being made regarding their education and this was amazing to see and clearly evident in my discussions and findings.

When I asked them if they felt the school should have its Investing in Children Membership Award™ renewed, they all said **“Yes... definitely.”**

I therefore have no hesitation in recommending this.

Well Done!

Endorsement by Young People

This report has been endorsed by the young people.

Eleanor Seed
Awards Manager
July 2024

Investing in Children CIC

Investing in Children Membership Award™ is a registered Trademark™.

Investing in Children CIC is a company (number 08428687) registered in England and Wales:

The Sjovoll Centre, Front Street, Framwellgate Moor, Durham, DH1 5BL

Tel: 0191 307 7030. Company Reg. 8428687

info@investinginchildren.net  www.investinginchildren.net
