Fairway School & Children’s Centre

Based on the western side of the London borough of Barnet, the eponymous Fairway School is a unique one-form entry primary school. The school offers wraparound childcare for children from two years of age and is also attached to a children’s centre. Fairway shares its building with Northway School for children with complex special educational needs. All three establishments moved into a fabulous new building in 2011. The school has a diverse reach area, situated within a short distance of the most affluent areas in Barnet, although the neighbouring estates have high levels of social deprivation. Here to discuss how the school navigates this terrain is its head teacher, Alison Edmonds.

Fairway School currently has a high percentage of children eligible for free school meals, and we serve an ethnically diverse community; indeed, most of our children are from minority groups. There are more than 34 ethnic groups within our school and over 35 different languages spoken by our children – Fairway is an exceptionally inclusive school. We have an increasing number of children with complex physical and learning needs at our school. We are fortunate enough to work with and learn from specialist colleagues from our neighbouring special needs school, such that we can offer excellent, tailored provision to all of our children.

Our motto is “Success for all” – and by “all” we mean our whole school community, as we promote learning at all levels. We deliver high-quality learning opportunities to our children, staff, parents and local residents. We really do consider our school to be at the heart of our local community.

Our journey

The school and the children’s centre work co-operatively, sharing a strong commitment to developing a learning community. In recent years, following a period of uncertainty, we’ve been on a journey of rapid improvement, and Fairway School and Children’s Centre have seen considerable changes. The main priorities for the leadership team at Fairway have included appointing and inducting new staff and building staff morale; developing a rigorous cycle of monitoring and identifying and meeting the training needs of all staff via robust performance management systems; updating key policies and establishing an enriched curriculum; and introducing assessment and data management procedures that meet the 2014 national curriculum and government requirements.

An inspiring curriculum

We enable our children to learn through encouraging trial and error, deduction and analogy-making, problem-solving of practical and intellectual kind and imaginative and exploratory work. We have a strong belief that if learners were to be treated merely as passive recipients, their learning would be severely circumscribed. We value the fact that children bring their personal experiences, interests, habits, culture and heritage to the learning process.

We strongly believe in active learning, which is not to be confused with simply having practical things to do, with lots of activity. It is much more complex than that; it is intellectually critical engagement with a task or a problem. Active learning can be applied to a practical task, to a conversation or to simply thinking things through.

We aim to provide a lively and creative curriculum in order to challenge and motivate our children and ensure they fully participate in a range of high-quality learning opportunities. We have developed a topic-based style of learning in order to develop the children’s knowledge and skills and enable them to become fully immersed in their learning. Our curriculum requires all of our children to be innovative and proactive.

Back to basics

Fairway School is committed to providing high-quality learning experiences that lead to a consistently high level of pupil progress for all. Emphasis is placed on developing the core skills of speaking and listening,