

History of The Sweyne Park School

Our Context

The Sweyne Park School was opened in 1997, on the Sweyne School site, following the closure of two secondary schools, The Sweyne School and The Park School. Both schools had a history of surplus pupil places, and so combining to one new school was planned to improve resources on one site for the pupils of the locality. From the outset we were determined to establish a school which had a culture of respect and valued all the individuals who were part of the school community. Our Code of Respect: "**Respect yourself; respect other people; respect the environment**" is embedded throughout the school. We believe that people want to succeed, yet, to develop their capacities and self-esteem, they require praise, support and challenge.

To support the new school, a major building project was initiated in 1997, and completed in 1999, funded by the LEA/DfES. This comprised a number of new buildings, a block of four classrooms and seven offices and a new music suite and sports hall. The Lord Lieutenant of Essex, The Lord Braybrooke JP, opened the new building on 4th November 1999 and Rio Ferdinand opened the new Sports Hall on 14th May 1999.

There was also major refurbishment within the Sweyne School building comprising changing rooms, staff room, library, drama studio and learning development department. The total cost of the project was three and a half million pounds.

The combined results of the two amalgamating schools had been in the region of 43-45% of pupils achieving five A*-C GCSE grades. We set out to target 60% of the pupils to gain five such grades. We also believed that pupils could develop greater confidence and extend their talents by participating more fully in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and so meet higher expectations. We achieved 61% five A*-C in 2001 and 74% five A*-C in 2006. This level of school improvement was achieved by raising the expectations of staff, pupils and families, and encouraging a commitment to high achievement throughout the school community.

We have a major Awards Evening each year and a Key Stage Three Celebration Evening to celebrate our pupils' success. At our Awards Evening, our Guests of Honour have been:

1998	Paul Lincoln, M.A. Director of Learning Services in Essex
1999	Michael Clark, BSc, PhD Member of Parliament for Rochford
2000	Patricia Robson, B.A. Hons Public Affairs & Communications Adviser, BP
2001	Elizabeth Hart, County Councillor
2002	Hugh Evans, B.A. Hons Deputy Headteacher of Sweyne & Sweyne Park Schools
2003	Mark Francois, B.A., M.A. Member of Parliament for Rayleigh

2004	Simon Mason, B.A. Headteacher of Honywood School (previously Deputy Head of Sweyne Park School)
2005	Sian Carr, B.A. Director, Eastern Leadership Centre, Cambridge
2006	Eileen Simmons, B.A. Educational Consultant - the National College of School Leadership
2007	Simon Jones, C.P.F.A. Chief Executive Investors in People UK
2009	Gill Mullis, B.A., M.A. Pupil Voice Co-ordinator of the National Specialist Schools & Academic Trust

In order to raise expectations, effective systems and structures were established. These ensure high quality communication and regular monitoring within a culture that values each individual, and embed mentoring and coaching as part of many of our practices.

In 2001 we were inspected by **Ofsted** and **achieved an excellent report**. We appeared on the **Chief Inspector's list of outstanding schools for 2002**.

Continuing the Professional Development of staff has played a crucial role in establishing a culture in which staff see the school as a learning community for all stakeholders. For us a learning community requires people to behave with integrity, trust each other and so be able to take risks without fear of blame. We were very proud to gain **Investors in People status** in 1999 and have this recognition confirmed again in 2002 and 2005. We also gained **Training School status** in 2003 and were re-designated in 2007. These Awards reflect our commitment to the continued development of our staff. We hold weekly workshops and an annual residential conference where good practice is shared. We make our workshop sessions active, and employ a range of approaches to learning, so that good classroom practice is actually modelled. These sessions place staff in learning situations that relate closely to classroom experiences that are effective for pupil learning. Frequently a member of staff, often a junior member of staff, takes the role of facilitating part of these sessions, sharing practice and coaching colleagues. Numerous members of staff have delivered Inset at national and local level and we have shared resources with over 1,000 schools.

We currently work with **PGCE students from five Higher Education providers** and also offer a **graduate teacher training programme**. This work has involved a large number of our teachers training as mentors, which has contributed significantly to the creation of a culture which anticipates teachers coaching each other and working to create positive classrooms in which pupils make good progress. 45% of our current staff undertook part of their training at Sweyne Park School.

We became a **Specialist Science School** in 2003 and a **Leading Edge School** in 2004, successfully re-designating in 2007. This recognition has involved us in working with and supporting development in a number of other schools in Essex.

As a **Specialist Science School**, we organise a wide range of activities, including:

- a Gifted and Talented Science Summer School for Years 6, 7 and 8.

- "Science Question Time" for Gifted and Talented Year 11 pupils from Sweyne Park and neighbouring schools
- a range of "Science Challenge" events held for pupils of primary school age.
- a range of revision workshops for pupils from Sweyne Park and other local schools in relation to Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 testing.
- the school's use as a Specialist Science Training Centre for teachers.

Embedding a significant commitment to **Pupil Voice** as part of our school ethos has had a positive effect on classroom practice. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop coaching and mentoring skills and take part in our work developing and evaluating high quality learning.

Pupil Voice

Our **Pupil Voice** work involves:

- School and Year Council
- Pupil involvement in Department and Whole School Reviews, and the Whole School Development Plan
- Pupil Conferences and Competitions
- Pupil involvement in whole school evaluation activities
- Pupils hosting and guiding school events
- Pupils initiating and organising our charity work
- Appointment of new staff.

We are committed to offering a broad education and have a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. We produce a family newspaper each week.

We gained the **International School Award** in 2001 and again in 2005, and have established links with schools in **France, Germany, Holland, Australia, the USA, Tanzania and China**.

We gained the **Artsmark Award** in 2001 and **Artsmark Silver Award** in 2005.

Under Kate Spiller's inspirational leadership, we were the first school to gain the Investors in Excellence Award in October 2005 and in October 2006 achieved another excellent OFSTED Report and became one of only three schools nationally to achieve the coveted Investors in People Champion status. In February 2007 we achieved the Healthy School award and have now been asked to become a lead school in this area.

See the Sweyne Park Times Issue 348 for more details about Kate Spiller.

<http://www.sweynepark.com/pdf/Kate.PDF>