

Why Rossett is a very good school

From: Mrs Pat Hunter, Headteacher, Rossett School, Harrogate.

I WAS rather perturbed by a letter that appeared on your pages last week mentioning Rossett School. ('Heartache caused by school policy', *Harrogate Advertiser*, October 16.)

While I recognise that a faith school is the preferred option of some parents for their children, I found it very puzzling that someone should feel so distraught after visiting us.

Harrogate parents are very fortunate in that they have five excellent secondary schools to choose from in the town all with well above national average results.

At Rossett, our own have improved year on year and this year we had 94% of students achieve five or more GCSEs with A* - C grades.

Our regular surveys also show that the parents of our students are very pleased with the support, care and guidance we offer.

Feedback we have received from our recent open day and evening has been overwhelmingly positive, and we are expecting another full intake of students in September 2010.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet the letter writer and his partner personally and show them round school during the day, when they can see for themselves the good behaviour and positive attitudes demonstrated by our students.

It is also worth highlighting, I feel, that admissions to St Aidan's CE School are based on "religious practice and worship, sibling connections and closeness to the school" and not, as suggested in the letter, a parent's ability to carry out charity work or participate in other activities.

Diverse and happy place

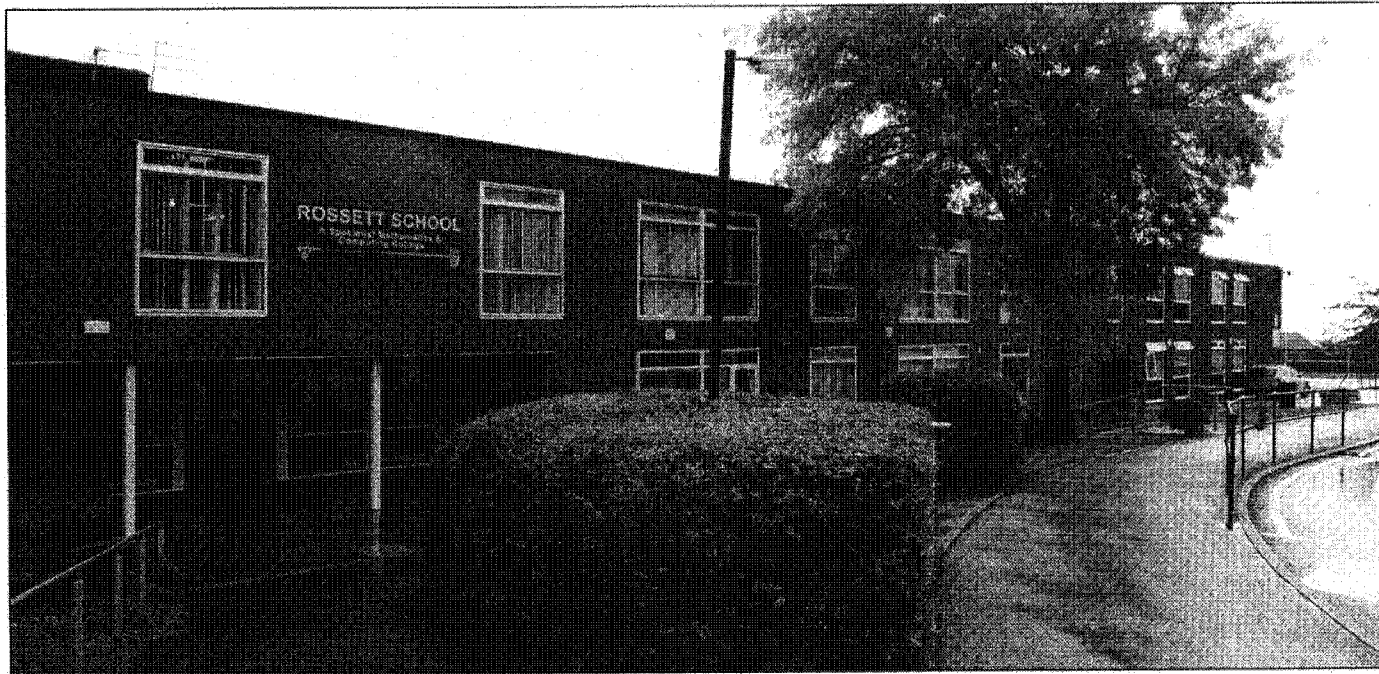
From: Victoria Smith-Dunn, Beech Road, Harrogate.

I TOO attended St Aidan's and had similar feelings to Christian Dunston's partner when receiving the news that our daughter had not been given a place at our first choice secondary school (Letters, October 16).

I chose to embrace what I could not change and joined Rossett PTA to have a greater understanding of how the school works.

I now spend a lot of time at Rossett and have found it to be a diverse, dynamic place that also provides a welcoming and happy environment.

The teaching is of a very high standard, with teachers determined to ensure that all children, whatever their capabilities, reach their full potential. The academic



"Time it was recognised" - Parents have contacted us to praise staff for the excellent standards at Rossett School. (S)

progress of our child and the speed with which she is developing are beyond our expectations.

I have two other children who I will be proud to send - out of choice - to Rossett. I am now chair of the PTA at the school and would be happy to talk to anyone that has concerns and would like to know more about Rossett from a parent's point of view. I can be contacted via our website www.rossettpta.co.uk.

PTA is a growing force in school

From: Christina Herring, Richmond Hill, Markington.

I WAS saddened to read of the woman's distress over her child being given Rossett. Our children's education is too important to let rumour and old prejudice guide our decisions.

Our experience with Rossett was wonderful. They were helpful, proactive and never gave up, no matter how difficult things got. Their results are wonderful and their PTA is a growing force within the school.

The opportunities and facilities available to the kids are fantastic. Her child will flourish at Rossett if she allows a positive mindset to the experience.

My son loves being at Rossett

Name: Helen Mercer-Jones, Beech Road, Harrogate.

IT made me very sad to read that a mother felt she was letting her son down because he was going to end up at Rossett High School.

I pride myself on always doing the best for my children; so, when my son came home and said he WANTED to go to Rossett I explored all of the options. His friend, who lives a

few doors away, put down Grammar as his first choice. I was now faced with a dilemma: do I go with my son's wishes, or, should I influence him? So, we visited all of the schools and really looked into all the pros and cons.

We selected Rossett as our first choice. When the letter arrived offering him a place there my son ran up and down the street shouting "Yes! I got into Rossett!" His friend down the road got into Grammar!

He has now been there for almost two months and he loves it. He is involved in so many sporting events and is studying really interesting topics. He actually enjoys doing his home work and his schooling is really coming on.

I am delighted that we chose to send our child to Rossett, and, when it comes to my other two children, I will be more than happy to send them there too. I do not think that means I have failed my children.

I would urge anyone who doesn't know much about Rossett to talk to parents with children there. It is an excellent school, and I am proud to be part of it.

Committed head teacher

From: Caryl Hallett, West End Avenue, Harrogate

I WAS surprised, and to some extent offended, to read Christian Dunston's recent letter regarding his experience of steering his partner's son's admission into a local secondary school.

Whilst I have some sympathy with his stance in relation to faith school access, I feel I must respond regarding the implied criticism of Rossett School.

Two of my sons attended Rossett as we, as parents, were keen for them to attend a good 'choice' school which develops individual talents and abilities.

Both of our boys were very happy there and both benefitted from the nurturing environment which is generated, and from the positive and caring atmosphere that the school promotes.

The school is led by a talented and committed head teacher and a strong teaching staff. Last year's GCSE results (94 per cent A-C passes) illustrated the enormous progress that has made academically in recent times and produced grades which would be wholeheartedly applauded and accepted by parents across the country.

Perhaps there lies the problem? Harrogate is blessed with a number of outstanding schools and it is human nature, perhaps, to establish a perceived 'pecking order' based largely on historical academic results.

Whilst other high schools in the town accept children based upon a selective process of one kind or another (religious or financial) Rossett succeeds sometimes in spite of its circumstances. It should be applauded for doing so.

There are many reasons why the current system is unjust, and unfair, and these issues will remain until the Government works towards creating a secular system which provides equal opportunities for all.

In the meantime Mr Dunston and his partner may feel that they have failed to jump through the hoops necessary for entry to a selective school but they have not failed as parents. Rossett is a very good school; it is time that is recognised as such.

We couldn't ask for more...

From: Deborah de Brunner, Burn Bridge Road, Harrogate.

I WAS sad to read the letter about the mum crying in the playground car park last week. Two of our children go to Ros-

sett and we hope another will join them in September. As parents we honestly feel sending our children there was one of the best decisions we have ever made.

They are achieving academically and go to a school with friendly, enthusiastic and caring staff. We couldn't ask for more.

Without taking away the obvious stress of the first child moving up to secondary school it does need to be pointed out that we in Harrogate are very lucky and none of us is faced with the prospect of one very good school and one very poor one.

It is very important to keep things in perspective and, wherever this child goes, with the support of the parents, I am sure he will be happy... particularly if he does end up at Rossett.

School's staff are second to none

From: Julie Fairweather, address supplied.

I AM extremely saddened to hear that anyone would assume that their child would fit into a school just because they attended the school themselves. Schools change dramatically from one year to the next.

I kept a completely open mind when my son made the transition to secondary school, I sat through all of the open evenings and made a choice based on the school I thought would best serve my child.

In all honesty I wanted my son to attend the Grammar school as he was good at languages but he was turned away and was given our second choice "Rossett School".

The only words to describe this now looking back on his five years at Rossett are thank goodness he was lucky enough to be accepted and be part of such a wonderful school.

All of the children I know at Rossett in my son's year and lots of friends in other year groups have received nurturing and guidance and have achieved outstanding results, my own son achieving A grades in GCSE's and As level French in Year 10.

He has been to Boston, New England, Japan and Paris and has formed life-long friendships.

Where did I send my daughter this year? Rossett. Is she happy? Yes she is.

I feel confident that in a year, if Mr Dunston and his partner allow their child to give Rossett a fair chance they will be saying that they not only forgive the local county council but that they too feel lucky and privileged to be part of such a wonderfully academic and well-rounded school.

Although there are honest and well meaning people in this world, Mr Dunston should feel proud he has not had to temporarily take part in essential committees and voluntary groups for all the wrong reasons!

This is a wonderful opportunity for me to say a huge thank you to all the staff and pastoral care support at Rossett - you are second to none.

School is not a last chance saloon

From: DA Huddart, Old Barber, Harrogate.

MR DUNSTAN'S letter is an unacceptable affront to all the past, present and future pupils, staff and parents involved with Rossett School and he makes it sound as though the school is some sort of Last Chance Saloon.

Well, I have news for you Mr Dunston - it is not. My family and many others faced a similar dilemma a few years ago as a result of the pathetic, discriminatory and probably illegal schools admission policy which now is, thankfully, under review.

We had hoped to get our children into a school that was closer to our home but the fact is that both my daughters now attend Rossett and in terms of achievement, extra-curricular activities and social involvement I can assure him that they could not be happier.

And neither could I. Rossett has a high level of educational achievement in many areas and the amount and quality of trips, sports and social activities is breathtaking and is certainly ahead of some of the schools which he clearly thinks are better.

My sister and I have prospered educationally at this school

From: Alice McAvoy, Rossett School.

I AM writing in response to Mr Christian Dunston's letter about the school admissions policy and his partners' distress at the prospect of her child going to Rossett School and I would like to put her mind at ease.

I am 12-years-old and I currently attend that school. My time at Rossett has been enjoyable and memorable for all the right reasons and I am looking forward to the rest of my time there.

My sister also attends Rossett but is due to leave for university next year.

My sister has done incredibly well while at this school and I also hope to do as well as she has.

The fact this man's partner was driven to tears by my school made me very upset and I was also very confused as to why.

Also, I don't feel like my parents have failed me by sending me to Rossett. I know that Rossett is the right school for me and also that it is a good school with brilliant facilities.

Insulting attitude towards everyone doing such a great job here

From: A Thompson, Swarcliffe Road, Harrogate.

I AM writing in reply to a letter in last week's *Advertiser* headed Heartache caused by school policy.

If I understand him correctly he says his wife is in tears and feels she is a rubbish mum because their child will have to go to Rossett!

This is greatly insulting to

everybody at Rossett, staff, students and parents.

My daughter is at Rossett and my son will hopefully start there next September.

I am very pleased with the school on all levels - academic, social and emotional and believe the pupils to all be very happy and successful.

Whilst this lady may be disappointed her son may not get into St Aidan's, she should be highly delighted if he does, indeed, get into Rossett.

A rewarding time working at Rossett

From: Ian Winchester, Gordon Avenue, Harrogate.

I REFER to Christian Dunston's letter of October 16.

He refers to his partner as having failed her son because he would not get in to St Aidan's and that she broke down in tears in Rossett School car park "Where her son will surely go when he leaves primary". By inference they are suggesting that Rossett is a second class school.

It is well known that both St Aidan's and Harrogate Grammar are always over subscribed and that other secondary schools have to take those who have failed to get their first choice for whatever reason.

For 30 years I was responsible for Year 7 at Rossett and liaised with staff at primary schools

and had to deal with many second choice pupils.

I cannot bring to mind any of these children who resented their time at Rossett, they got on with it and had successful school careers.

This initial disappointment was simply lost in a new and challenging experience. Children are very adaptable and do not have the fixed, but often misguided views of what certain schools are like as some parents do.

Harrogate is blessed with good secondary schools of which Rossett is undoubtedly one.

To infer that it is inferior is unfair to the present pupils and staff and to those former pupils who were 'second choices' who remember their time at Rossett as a rewarding experience.

Challenging and exciting programme at Rossett

From: Jayne Morrison, Beckwith Crescent, Harrogate.

I WOULD just like to write to say what a hidden jewel Rossett School is within Harrogate.

My husband and I both feel this is an excellent school offering encouragement and support to all its pupils.

We have two sons currently at the school and are applying this month for our third son to join them next September.

They offer a challenging, out-of-comfort zone and exciting

program developing both academic and social abilities.

They have raised our eldest son's achievements at GCSE to well above national average and are encouraging our second son to expand into areas such as Latin.

There are many exciting extracurricular activities offered and they have the best dedicated Outdoor Pursuits teacher. For our children though, their part in the Japanese Exchange trips will always be a highlight