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Mrs A Garratt  
Principal  
The Hillcrest School and Community College  
Simms Lane  
Netherton  
Dudley  
DY2 0PB

Dear Mrs Garratt

**Ofsted 2011–12 survey inspection programme: a review of anti-bullying practice in schools**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 14 September 2011 as part of our survey of schools' work to create a positive school culture and prevent and tackle bullying.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

This letter briefly summarises our discussion at the end of the visit.

**Strengths of this aspect of the school's work**

- The new highly visible code of conduct has synthesised the school's very clear expectations of the way all members of the school community should behave towards each other. It is understood well by staff and students, including those who are new to the school. This code is already helping to promote greater consistency in managing students' behaviour. Both staff and students view this improvement positively.
- The school's expectation that all students and staff will treat each other with respect is particularly strong and was uppermost in students' minds when they were asked how they were expected to behave in school. In the playground, at lunchtimes, and around the school, inspectors observed the students behaving calmly and considerately towards each other. Their feeling of safety and security at these times is greatly assisted by the highly visible staff and the well-trained prefects.

- The school has carried out an extremely thorough analysis of students' views and experiences of bullying, including bullying that happens on the way to and from school, and cyberbullying that takes place out of school. They are using this wealth of information well to educate and support students in this area. Incidents are recorded thoroughly and the impact of the actions taken after an incident is followed up at a later date.
- The school has a holistic approach to pastoral care and this is seen as an integral part of helping to secure good academic achievement and this is reflected in the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders. The form tutors and heads of house spoken with had an excellent understanding of the extent of their role in supporting and challenging students, and in modelling and encouraging positive interaction between them.
- Students have a very good understanding of what to do if they are being bullied. They strongly believe that if they seek help, advice and guidance will quickly be provided and issues will be resolved. They were keen to stress that incidents are dealt with fairly as well as firmly and that it is possible to have a 'fresh start' after making a mistake. Students understand the importance of helping to prevent bullying and take their part in this seriously.
- The school carefully plans the curriculum to support students' moral and social development. Key topics that promote equality of opportunities and develop students' understanding of diversity are revisited at different points in a student's school career. In addition, particular topics or projects are introduced in response to issues that arise in school or in the wider community.
- The school makes very strong arrangements for new students, both at the start of Year 7 and for those who join at other times during the academic year. Year 7 students had an excellent understanding of how and where they could seek help, and how they were expected to behave towards others. The induction process had helped to alleviate their worries about joining a new school. Older students appreciated the care with which the school selected 'buddies' for them, which had helped them to become fully integrated into the life of the school.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- monitoring more systematically the delivery and effectiveness of personal, social, health and citizenship education
- considering evaluating the experience of disabled students and those with special educational needs, and analysing all students' perceptions of disability in order to plan future work in this area.

I hope that this visit has been useful in the further development of this aspect of the school's work.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Sue Morris-King**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**