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Mrs C McCarron
The Barlow RC High School
Parrs Wood Road
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Manchester
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Dear Mrs McCarron

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 27 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

- Relationships between students and between staff and students are very positive. The high levels of staff supervision during breaks and lunchtimes provide security for students. They are frequently characterised by relaxed and positive exchanges between members of staff and students.
- Thanks to high-profile assemblies on bullying and behaviour-related topics, students are confident that bullying issues will be taken seriously by the school. They know who to talk with should they have concerns and they feel safe in and around the school.
- There is a good broad understanding of the expectation that students should be respectful towards each other.
- Although only recently introduced, some good elements within the curriculum include the innovative 'RICH time' (Responsible, Independent, Christian, Human beings), which has the potential to provide powerful impact in tutorial time, although this has not yet been evaluated.

- Behaviour and anti-bullying policies provide clear procedures and strategies to encourage consistency. They address different types of bullying, offer support to victims and include details of structured intervention for those responsible for bullying. Strategies such as the online 'SHARP' system, which enables anonymous reporting of bullying incidents or concerns, support this.
- Transition arrangements are good. Induction processes for Year 7 students are thorough. They quickly gain confidence and feel safe at school. Students who join at other times in their school career are also introduced early to the school's systems for dealing with bullying, so that they are less vulnerable.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing a greater coherence and simplicity to the way in which behaviour expectations are communicated to and with pupils, to help them understand how reducing low-level unpleasant behaviour can also reduce potentially more serious bullying
- providing whole school opportunities for students to discuss and reflect on the use of potentially offensive language and behaviour between friends, so that they have a better understanding of the contribution that low-level behaviours such as this have on the overall climate
- continuing the development of a more systematic analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data around student conduct and relationships, including bullying, so that the impact of curricular and other actions can be evaluated more effectively.

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

As 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

John Peckham
Her Majesty's Inspector