

15 November 2006

Mr B Cannon
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cannon

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 November to look at work in ESD.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with governors, pupils, teachers and other staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and attendance at two lessons and assembly.

The overall effectiveness of ESD was judged to be satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement and standards

Standards and achievement in ESD are satisfactory.

- Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of issues linked to ESD, mainly through geography, science, history and religious education.
- Pupils know that healthy eating choices are desirable. Many make sensible choices in the school café and understand the reduction in some meal options.

- Different forms of energy generation and conservation are increasingly being understood as reflected in a Year 9 lesson when pupils willingly conducted a simple energy survey.
- Pupils' commitment to helping in the community is developed well in initiatives such as the 'groundworks' project in the Columbia centre. It is not developed as extensively for pupils and students in the mainstream classes.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in ESD are satisfactory overall and have some good features.

- An assembly opportunity used a simple, but telling illustration, to show pupils the comparatively small amount of natural resources available in the world.
- Teachers effectively develop pupils' empathy and understanding of concepts such as energy use and factors which contribute to industrial decline and social change.
- Pupils' own ability to influence change in ways that are relevant and achievable was not always stressed highly enough in the activities seen.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory and there are good aspects in the way activities are planned to cover aspects of national guidance on 'Every Child Matters' principles.

- The religious education curriculum makes particularly good references to principles of learning related to ESD such as stewardship, resources, environmental responsibilities and 'fair trade' issues.
- The six enterprise days held each year provide a good range of additional activities for students and pupils to follow.
- The school's recent curriculum audit has highlighted weaker aspects in ESD planning in English and mathematics.
- Issues such as anti bullying, drugs awareness and healthy living studies are high profile within the curriculum.

Leadership and management of ESD

Leadership and management of this area are satisfactory.

- The school has responded quickly after being included in this survey visit by voluntarily completing its own audit and self-evaluation.
- Although there is no overall policy for ESD, the school's philosophy and ethos is sympathetic to promoting sustainable issues.

- Staff take the issues relating to ESD seriously and are developing sensible priorities for improvement.
- The school listens actively to pupils', students' and parental views, but recognises that ways of gaining the views of the community could be extended.
- Although the school council is sympathetic to environmental issues, it has not fully explored ways in which it can positively influence ESD aspects around school.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- The very good school ethos and day to day routines reflects the high profile given to 'Every Child Matters' guidance and principles.
- Good provision is made for pupils who find integrating into mainstream classes difficult.

Areas for Improvement

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include the need to:

- develop a whole school policy for ESD
- develop the governors' awareness of ethical purchasing arrangements and energy use within school
- extend pupils' understanding of ESD issues by working to gain 'eco status' and by making greater use of the school grounds
- ensure that more subjects include planning to promote ESD principles
- consider strengthening overseas links with other schools to promote pupils' greater understanding of other cultures and localities.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ESD in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge
Additional Inspector