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Mrs J Skelton
The Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Skelton

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTC)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Thursday 14 June to look at the way that learning outside the classroom contributes to your school's curriculum and to pupils' achievement and personal development.

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 are published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of some lessons and seeing the school at work.

The overall effectiveness of the contribution made by learning outside the classroom to the curriculum was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards including personal development

- In relation to their starting points, pupils achieve well. Many pupils enter the school with basic skills well below average but good personal development, good teaching and learning and high expectations help all pupils to make considerable progress.
- LOTC makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement because it brings learning to life and helps them to make good progress. The visits by pupils in Year 2 to the Tynemouth Toy Museum and by those in Years 3 and 4 to the Roman settlement at Vindolanda, for example, gave pupils a

much deeper understanding of what they were studying and led them to be more engaged in their work back in the classroom.

- Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well, have good manners and are polite. They have good attitudes to learning and willingly and confidently engage in discussion and debate about their learning both inside and outside the classroom. They especially enjoy their LOTC activities and can describe how the visits out of school and the visitors into school help them with their learning.
- Extra curricular clubs make a considerable contribution to the pupils' personal development. Pupils organise and run the clubs which take place at lunchtime and this promotes a sense of responsibility, as well as developing self confidence and such skills as organisation and leadership.
- Teachers informally analyse the impact of LOTC activities and can talk about the impact upon individuals. However, there is no formal evaluation or record kept of the impact of LOTC upon pupils' achievement and personal development

Quality of teaching and learning within LOTC

- Lessons and activities are exciting. Classrooms and corridors are bright and engaging with colourful displays of the children's work which reflect the importance of LOTC to the education the pupils receive each day. All teachers understand the place of LOTC and are keen to extend opportunities especially where they believe it will enhance pupils' learning.
- The planning, preparation and follow up activities are thorough and the frequent opportunities for LOTC are structured thoughtfully to link to curriculum themes. The visits to Durham Cathedral, Saltwell Park and the source of the River Tyne, for example, had motivated pupils to produce some good quality work in literacy, numeracy and science, as well as in the humanities and the creative subjects. In this way, LOTC helps to create a rich learning environment.
- Teachers make pre-visits to places to which they intend to take the children, prepare their own information and activity packs for visits and identify precise learning activities when they are back in school. This helps to ensure that opportunities to enrich the learning for the children through LOTC are fully realised.
- Images of LOTC visits are captured digitally and provide an impressive record of the range of the activities which take place. Back in the classroom, PowerPoint computer-based presentations, which include photographs of the pupils on the visit, are used effectively to refresh memories and focus the learning.
- Teachers are happy to try out new approaches in their teaching and pupils are increasingly encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. Within a framework, pupils are closely involved in deciding what they would like to learn from a particular study and how they will learn it. As a result, pupils are engaged in their learning and enthused by the responsibility they have been given.

Quality of the contribution made by LOTC to the curriculum

- LOTC sits at the heart of the curriculum. It is integrated into schemes of work and every half term each class has a specified LOTC visit which is carefully linked to all subjects. In this way the opportunities offered for enriching learning and supporting personal and social development are fully realised.
- The Year 6 residential visit is particularly popular. However, its timing towards the end of the year means that the benefit in terms of personal and social development in particular is not really appreciated since the pupils are only in the school for another six weeks or so.
- The LOTC opportunities provided are carefully structured to meet the needs of the pupils. Activities are thoughtfully selected to match their academic, personal and social requirements.
- Although learning outside the classroom is a significant part of the curriculum, the school does not know whether each subject is fairly represented in the programme of visits and visitors. Activities are evaluated by individual teachers and the curriculum is regularly reviewed but there is no formal check on the coverage of curriculum subjects.
- The school provides a good range of extra curricular clubs which are popular with the pupils. Lunchtime and after school clubs are provided in response to surveys of parents and pupils. Take up is monitored as to who takes part, but not who does not take part.

Leadership and management of LOTC

- You and your staff have a clear and well founded belief in the importance of LOTC and see it linking to their whole school vision of ensuring 'The best for each child'. The recent development of a creative curriculum, with its emphasis upon experiential learning, has led to a lively and stimulating learning community in which LOTC has become increasingly important.
- All staff are committed to LOTC activities and key stage and subject coordinators have a clear picture of how LOTC supports learning inside the classroom, not least in relation to pupils' interest in their learning and motivation towards their studies.
- There is a strong team approach across the school and individual teachers support each other well in their LOTC activities as well as in the related work within the classroom. Activities are evaluated by individual teachers who reflect regularly upon the curriculum offered and on the experiences the pupils receive. This helps to ensure the consistency and effectiveness of the activities undertaken throughout the school.
- Risk assessments are thorough and correct safeguarding procedures are in place.

Inclusion

- You work hard to ensure that pupils participate in the visits provided, recognising that LOTC activities can help to bring together the children from the twenty nationalities which are represented in the school.
- The school analyses which groups of pupils access the extra-curricular provision but it does not do the same for individual pupils. As a result, it does not know well enough which pupils are benefiting from the clubs and which are not.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- exploring ways of evaluating and recording the impact of LOTC upon pupils' achievement and personal development
- checking that all subjects are fairly represented in LOTC activities
- checking that all pupils have reasonable access to extra curricular activities.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop 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

Michael Maddison
Her Majesty's Inspector