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15 June 2007

Mr Keith Duggan
Headteacher
Gateway Primary School
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Dear Mr Duggan

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 13 June 2007 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 senior leaders and staff, a discussion with the school council, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and brief visits to classes and lunchtime activities.

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

Achievement and standards, including personal development

- The majority of pupils start school with well below average knowledge, skills and understanding for their age and most have little spoken English. They make excellent progress, partly due to your relentless drive to develop the pupils' literacy skills, coupled with many other outstanding aspects of provision which your school offers. By the time pupils leave, they reach well above the national standards and have done so for some time. This is outstanding achievement.

- Innovative and imaginative use of information communication technology (ICT) across the school helps the pupils to make swift progress. LOTC activities are captured assiduously through use of video and digital cameras by both adults and pupils, often in creative ways. All recordings are of a consistently high quality and are integrated immediately into planning and assessment to consolidate and extend the pupils' understanding in lessons. This is excellent practice.
- You have detailed assessment and tracking procedures that link well to daily lesson planning so that all pupils' needs are met very well indeed. Pupils have clear targets and, most importantly, these are understood by all the adults who support them in a sensitive manner. Pupils' work from all year groups showed at least good progress or better. Marking was of a high quality in the sample of work analysed.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are impressive. They display excellent levels of concentration in class and are highly motivated to succeed. Pupils get on well together and quickly develop important skills like reflection, enquiry, independence and collaboration. They are able to talk about the many innovative aspects of LOTC on offer, with a clear understanding of how these experiences help them learn better, and they do so with great pride in a very courteous way.
- Without exception all pupils could link LOTC directly to topics and, in many instances, recall what they had learnt in an articulate and sophisticated manner. A younger child said, 'You must eat fruit and vegetables to grow strong', and he quickly reeled off a range of accurate examples, ably supported by his peers. Year 3 and 4 pupils spoke confidently about the relevance of visits to enrich learning in history and science and the older pupils described eloquently about how the London Walk and the visit to the Cabinet War Museum enriched their understanding in geography, art, history and English. A pupil's online diary of this visit, which included an interview with War Veterans, was poignant and moving.
- The staff keep excellent portfolios of the pupils' work using online flip charts which are carefully designed and easily accessible. This too, is excellent practice.

Quality of teaching and learning within LOTC

- Relationships and care, both in and out of the classroom, are outstanding. You and the staff understand the individual needs of the Gateway pupils and are skilled at getting the best out of them. Staff are sensitive to pupils, and encourage them in a positive, purposeful way. Because you have excellent knowledge of individual pupils, work is planned carefully to ensure they succeed and they do!
- Lessons and activities are exciting, enriched by the frequent opportunities for LOTC which are structured thoughtfully to link in to curriculum themes. The visits to Pizza Express, Regents Park, Camley Park, Church Street, The Floating Classroom, London Zoo, The Tate, The Royal Albert Hall, The National Portrait Gallery, Lords Cricket ground and the Cabinet War Rooms

are examples of how learning is brought to life for the pupils. These practical experiences clearly motivate the pupils to produce high standards of work in all aspects of the curriculum.

- In the brief snapshots of lessons and activities observed, relationships were excellent. Expectations were high; teaching was lively and stimulating leading to commendable levels of concentration and interest from the pupils. The adults worked as an impressive team to reinforce the pupils' learning and questioning was skilful. This ensured the pupils achieved and all are delighted when they do. Praise is used assiduously to reward progress and is rightfully earned.
- The buzz that went around the whole school because the chicks were hatching in the nursery was symptomatic of your very 'special' learning community where adults and pupils thrive together and all want to be. The awe and wonder on the faces of these very young children was simply a joy to observe!
- Classrooms are full of vibrant displays of pupils' work in all aspects of the curriculum and it was very clear that the school places a strong emphasis on celebrating the pupils' achievements. This does much to contribute to the high self esteem they develop through their journey through school.

Quality of the contribution made by LOTC to the curriculum

- The curriculum is both innovative and exciting. It is carefully designed to ensure an appropriate balance between provision for the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT and opportunities for pupils to learn in imaginative, practical ways. The application of the core skills across all subjects is impressive.
- You and the staff have a fundamental belief that LOTC experiences are vital to extend the horizons of your pupils and you capitalise upon the rich cultural and historical surroundings available to you very well.
- Planning is meticulous at all levels and LOTC is integrated successfully into all subjects, featuring strongly in every theme. Activities are chosen thoughtfully to enrich and whet pupils' appetite for learning. There is a high level of practical work and opportunities for pupils to interact with their peers and the adults to make learning meaningful. The monitoring of LOTC by you, the deputy headteacher and subject leaders is rigorous and findings feed into future planning.
- Over the years you have developed a reputation for curriculum innovation and the school has developed excellent partnerships with a range of providers. I note that this has often resulted in published resources: the Antarctica project is a fitting example of this exciting work.
- The range of clubs and opportunities for the pupils to learn outside of school hours are excellent. These are valued greatly by the pupils and serve their academic, artistic and sporting interests well. Talking to pupils about their appreciation for learning Arabic and Spanish, and listening to how a pupil scored the winning run for her county at cricket was a joy! Musical activities on offer are very strong; the impromptu singing performance by the pupils was simply delightful!

Leadership and management of LOTC

- Working closely with your deputy headteacher and others you have developed, over time, an excellent philosophy for learning to meet the needs of Gateway pupils. These beliefs are right for your school and are based upon a clear vision underpinned by sound research evidence. You have used these excellent values to drive curriculum developments over several years with wisdom, rigour and real inspiration.
- You and your senior team provide impressive and energetic direction to the work of the school. You are well supported by enthusiastic staff members who crucially understand the direction the school is taking. School improvement is underpinned by excellent discussion and training opportunities. There is a clear sense of purpose to try things out, a willingness to take risks and to rethink if initiatives do not bear fruit. This is contributing significantly to the impressive team spirit existing at your school.
- The school evaluates its progress robustly to ensure the high standards in all aspects of work are maintained. There is no room for complacency and monitoring at all levels is rigorous. The management of the major building programme taking place is remarkable. It is indeed a fitting testament to the school's steely resolve not to let anything get in the way of its *raison d'etre*: to provide high quality care and education for the pupils at Gateway Primary School.

Inclusion

- You lead a very inclusive school where the needs of all the pupils and their parents and carers are met in a caring, creative and consultative way.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- when the building work is complete, and at an appropriate time for the school, consider ways to provide more structured play activities on the restricted and limited outdoor space available.

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

Mary Harlow
Her Majesty's Inspector