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25 June 2007

Ms J Van Ryssel
The Headteacher
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Dear Ms Van Ryssel

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 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 staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; visits to some lessons taking place outside the classroom and seeing the school at work.

The overall effectiveness of the contribution made by learning outside the classroom to the curriculum is good and improving.

Achievement and standards, including personal development

- Overall, pupils make very good progress in the core subjects by the time they leave school. The school sets challenging attainment targets and has successfully surpassed these over the last three years. The overall standards in English, mathematics and science are well above national averages by the end of Year 6.
- These high quality outcomes are, to a great extent, due to the good quality of teaching and a strong focus on raising standards across the whole school. They are more commendable given the relatively high

numbers of pupils entering the school during the school year and the short timescales that teachers have with some Year 6 pupils.

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are outstanding. There is a very strong caring ethos across the school and a strong feeling of a 'school family community'. In all lessons pupils clearly enjoy the activities and respond well to the tasks set. You strongly believe that learning outside the classroom (LOTC) activities are contributing to the high quality learning and outcomes as well as to the personal development of the pupils. Much of the evidence for this belief comes from the feedback from pupils after the activities or from the annual questionnaire. The school does not have any established procedures for monitoring the impact that these LOTC activities have on standards.
- The wide variety of LOTC experiences offered to pupils is contributing greatly to their personal development and well being. For example, on a recent residential week for Year 5 and 6 pupils they experienced a wide range of activities which enhanced their personal development. In discussion, pupils expressed a very strong belief that the experiences had helped develop their social, mental and physical well being.

Quality of teaching and learning within LOTC

- Teachers recognise the value of LOTC and take every opportunity, as appropriate, to plan these enrichment activities into their lessons.
- Lessons are well planned and teachers make good use of outside environments to enhance the pupils' learning. This is particularly strong in Foundation and Key Stage 1.
- The planning, preparation and follow-up activities for LOTC are well managed. Teachers are particularly good at evaluating the value of the LOTC activity with the pupils once it has taken place. This provides good feedback for the staff.
- In all cases pupils clearly enjoy the activities which in turn contribute to the good level of learning that is taking place. Pupils respond well to questions from members of staff.
- The LOTC activities provide an extra dimension and richness to the teaching and learning that is less easily captured through the classroom. For example, one Key Stage 2 project on the local history of Morecambe Bay made very good use of the contribution from a Sea Fisheries Officer and a maritime museum. Pupils gained understanding and experiences which would not have been possible in school.
- Relationships are good. Pupils work safely and exercise a high amount of care when undertaking all activities. The quality of teaching and learning within LOTC activities is good.

Quality of the contribution made by LOTC to the curriculum

- You hold a strong belief that LOTC plays a vital role in developing the whole child and enhancing teaching and learning, although that is not made explicit in documentation.

- The school's programme for utilising opportunities outside the classroom is very extensive and well planned into the schemes of work for all year groups across most subject areas. You have rightly identified in the school development plan the need to be more creative in the use of LOTC in Literacy and Numeracy at Key Stage 2. Some of the best examples where LOTC is used well are seen in science, history, geography, art and design and PE.
- The school has excellent links with many and varied external resources and providers. It makes very good use of resources including museums, residential centres, external speakers, places of worship and its own school grounds. Tatham Fells, and four other primary schools, have formed particularly good links with a local secondary special school. Together this primary school cluster makes excellent use of the resources and facilities at the secondary school.
- Pupils have access to a wide and extensive range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities at lunchtimes and after school. The school runs a very effective and popular after-school club which makes good use of activities outside the classroom. During the inspection, pupils at this club were working well with a local 'willow weaver' to create sculptures in the school grounds.

Leadership and management of LOTC

- Overall LOTC is led and managed well. You have a strong belief in the role and value that LOTC has to play in the life of the school. Although these values are not fully documented it is unquestionable that all staff are aware of the value and share the vision. Prior to the inspection staff had not been aware of the Department for Education and Skills LOTC manifesto.
- When planning any activities the school complies with requirements to ensure that all risks are analysed and well covered. There is a clear policy which all staff must follow when planning and conducting educational visits. All administrative procedures are thoroughly followed and in place for any activity. Parents are well informed before any visit. Governors are kept suitably informed of all visits and they sign off each pre-visit form before any 'type B' visit is undertaken. You adhere very closely to the local authority's policy and guidance on educational visits.
- You have thorough systems in place for tracking pupils' progress and for evaluating the progress made by the school and its performance in each key area. However, the evaluation of the impact of LOTC on standards is not yet complete.

Inclusion

- This is a fully inclusive school where the needs of all the pupils are met in a caring manner. All pupils are valued as part of the whole school family.
- It is part of your ethos and philosophy that no pupil should be prevented from taking part in all planned activities including those outside the

classroom. The wide range of extra curricular activities on offer ensures that there is something of interest to involve everyone. As result all pupils attend residential and other external visits.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- producing a document which outlines the whole-school philosophy and reinforces the value of LOTC to the school
- considering ways of evaluating the impact that LOTC has on pupils' standards and achievement.

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

Brian Sharples
Her Majesty's Inspector