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Mrs D Ross-Wawrzynski
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Dear Mrs Ross-Wawrzynski

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 24 September 2007 to look at the way that learning outside the classroom contributes to your school's curriculum and to students' 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work, visits to one lesson and seeing the school at work.

The overall effectiveness of the contribution made by learning outside the classroom to the curriculum is outstanding.

Achievement and standards, including personal development

- The school sets challenging attainment targets at all key stages and has successfully surpassed these over the last three years. Standards at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science are well above national averages and the proportion of students attaining higher levels in these core subjects is exceptional.
- These high quality outcomes are down, to a great extent, to the good quality of teaching, a strong focus on raising standards and high expectations on the part of staff and students.

- Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are outstanding. They respond well to the lesson activities and clearly enjoy their time at school. You strongly believe that learning outside the classroom (LOTC) contributes to the high quality learning and the personal development of the students. Much of the evidence for this belief comes from the feedback by students. Students in Year 12 outline their involvement in learning outside the classroom activities as part of an entry profile to sixth form. While this is not always easy to quantify, statements from students and staff clearly support your view.
- The range of learning outside the classroom experiences offered to the students is exceptional and contributes greatly to their academic development as well as their personal development and well being. Scrutiny of school displays, case studies and documentation reveals the great breadth of opportunities on offer.

Quality of teaching and learning within LOTC

- Teachers recognise the value of learning outside the classroom and take every opportunity, as appropriate, to plan these enrichment activities into their lessons.
- Lessons are well planned and make good use of additional opportunities to enhance the students' learning. The planning, preparation and follow-up activities for learning outside the classroom are well managed.
- Discussion with students showed that in all cases they enjoy the activities which in turn contribute to the good learning taking place. Students respond well to challenging questioning from teachers and they provide well thought-out and reasoned answers.
- The activities in learning outside the classroom provide a richness to the teaching and learning that is less easily captured in the classroom or even via the internet. For example, one Year 11 class were using the computers to produce a report following a geography field trip to Grasmere. Students said that studying erosion of paths in the field gave a far greater understanding than reading about it on the internet.
- Relationships are good. Students work safely and responsibly, showing a high amount of care when undertaking all activities.

Quality of the contribution made by LOTC to the curriculum

- You make sure that learning outside the classroom pervades all aspects of the curriculum.
- 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 all subject areas. Some of the best examples where such learning is used well are seen in science, MFL, geography, drama and English to name a few.
- The school has excellent links with many and varied external resources and providers. It makes very good use of these resources including a

residential centre, external speakers, places of worship, theatres and international visits.

- Students have access to a wide and extensive range of extra curricular and enrichment activities at lunchtimes and after school. In addition there is one week set aside each year where all students in Years 7 to 10 are involved in a range of exciting activities.

Leadership and management of LOTC

- LOTC is led and managed well. You and the staff have a strong belief in the role and value that it has to play in the life of the school. Everyone has a joint responsibility for the planning of LOTC activities and staff ensure that all students in each year group are given fair opportunities to experience the range of activities on offer.
- When planning any activity the school has a clear policy which ensures compliance with all requirements and that risks are assessed and well covered. All administrative procedures are thoroughly followed with good management of visits by the educational visits co-ordinator.

Inclusion

- This is a fully inclusive school where the needs of all the students are met in a caring manner. It is part of the school's ethos and philosophy that no student should be prevented from taking part in any planned activities. This is seen very well through the way that the school ensures that all students attend the residential visit which takes place in Year 7.

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