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Mr T Smith  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Planning for change: the impact of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 02 December 2008 to look at work in planning for and implementing the new Key Stage 3 curriculum with particular reference to Year 7.

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 staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of a number of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the planning for and implementation of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum was judged to be good.

#### Achievement and standards

Standards on entry to the present Year 7 were around the national average. At this early stage of the implementation of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum, it is not possible to make a firm judgement on its impact on achievement, but the progress of the students observed in lessons was good.

- Exercise books and other work also demonstrated that students are making good progress.
- The new curriculum is making a good contribution to students' personal development and well-being. Year 7 students have very positive attitudes to school and to learning. The school's tracking

clearly shows that the introduction of the new curriculum has led to significant improvements in behaviour.

- Students say that the learning skills course has helped them to form positive relationships with each other.
- The learning skills course is also helping students to develop skills to underpin good learning in all subjects. These include good social and teamwork skills.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in Year 7 is good.

- Lessons are well planned and have good variety.
- Teachers manage classrooms well to create a calm and positive environment for learning. Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- The match of work to the particular needs and abilities of different students is limited in some lessons.
- Students receive helpful written feedback about their work that helps them to understand what they need to do to improve.
- The assessment of students' personal, learning and thinking skills in the learning skills course is at an early stage.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the new curriculum is good.

- Good use is being made of the opportunities provided by a reduction in curriculum content to make lessons more varied and enjoyable for students. This is supporting Year 7 students' good achievement and enjoyment.
- The learning skills course is a positive addition to the curriculum and is very popular with students. Schemes of work have been well planned and the quality of resources used in the course is high.
- The new learning skills course provides a range of opportunities for students to develop personal, learning and thinking skills, and the functional skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). However, these opportunities are not yet fully planned for in all learning skills lessons.

### Leadership and management of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum

The leadership and management of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum are good.

- The introduction of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum has been well considered and carefully planned.
- Middle leaders have a good understanding of the aims and intentions of the new curriculum. They are making good use of the opportunities offered by the changes to the national curriculum to improve provision in their subject areas.

- Good use has been made of a range of external training to support the introduction of the new curriculum.
- The introduction of the new learning skills course has been well led by the course's coordinator. Comprehensive plans are in place to monitor the success and impact of the new course.

## Inclusion

The impact of the curriculum on inclusion is good.

- All students were seen to be making good progress in the lessons observed.
- The new learning skills course is helping to ensure that all students make a successful transition into secondary education.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that learning skills lessons are more consistently focussed on the development of particular personal, learning and thinking skills
- developing strategies to assess students developing personal, learning and thinking skills within the learning skills course.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the curriculum 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Chris Russell  
Her Majesty's Inspector