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09 October 2008

Mrs M E Wright  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Wright

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff at Joseph Rowntree School, during my visit on the 09 October 2008 to look at work in promoting equality.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, interview with staff and a governor, telephone interviews with parents, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and observations of four lessons or parts of lessons.

The quality of provision to promote equalities is outstanding.

Features of good practice observed

- The excellent support for pupils may be vulnerable is demonstrated primarily through its whole school approach to individual care. There are specific interventions which have positive effects on groups of pupils, such as named teachers for gypsy, Roma and traveller students to go to if they have difficulties. The school's variety of approaches and care to ensure that these interventions are well matched to individuals have led to improved outcomes for all its students, which have recently moved to significantly above average.
- The school uses data well to provide focus for individual students when they are in danger of falling behind. Student targets are bench marked against expected outcomes, are regularly reviewed, and students, including those

who require extra help, know what is expected of them. This enables prompt and positive help to be provided where necessary.

- Joseph Rowntree is a calm, orderly community where learning is celebrated. Negative incidents are rare, and when they do happen are dealt with quickly, firmly and within the ethos of a school that is inclusive. The school is “intolerant of intolerance” and as a result students consistently comment on how secure they feel. All staff are vigilant in ensuring this remains so. For example, one student stated “I’ve been discriminated against as a traveller by other children...now teachers hear of it and sort it out so quickly.” A parent of a child with a medical syndrome commented that a bullying incident “was dealt with that day and never repeated.”
- Relationships generally are excellent which ensures that all students regardless of need, can confidently access their education. Pupils’ emotional needs are well met through, for example, an active peer mentoring programme, regular school nurse visits, and a school counsellor. This benefits all the students involved and contributes to a very positive ethos. “Being a peer mentor is really rewarding. Everyone wants to help the younger children along. And you don’t have to go straight to a teacher.” The sixth form has a commendable volunteering scheme structured into the timetable where students are expected to develop themselves through community work, either in school, for example by paired reading or assisting in lessons lower down the school, or working in other community provision.
- The school is strongly focussed on students as individuals, which means that all students have fair access to the many positive experiences that Joseph Rowntree School has to offer. There is a wide range of activities available, which can be tailored to encourage those who might otherwise opt out. For example, a trampolining course has encouraged the continued participation of girls who were disaffected from conventional games.
- There is inspirational teaching at Joseph Rowntree School, which benefits all the students who experience it and is particularly effective in ensuring that students with additional needs are fully engaged in stimulating, focussed, well planned activities. This ensures that all students make good progress.
- Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of students’ specific needs. For example, teachers of students with cochlear implants demonstrate appropriate knowledge and provide work that is well matched to the needs of learners.
- The school keeps the curriculum under constant review. There are good links with feeder primary schools which means there is continuity when pupils transfer to secondary. The school operates four pathways plus a college option for Key Stage 4 pupils which meet the varied needs of students. The school offers extra sessions for pupils outside the regular timetable to ensure they stay on target. Students, including those from vulnerable groups such as students with English as an additional language are enthusiastic about the wide range of extracurricular activities that are available.

## Areas for development

- There is some inconsistency in marking and as a result there are sometimes missed opportunities to provide pupils who have additional needs with effective feedback and clear written explanations of how to improve.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop promoting equalities in Joseph Rowntree School.

As I explained previously, 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

David McMahon  
Additional Inspector