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Ms P Dodgshon
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Dodgshon

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 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: scrutiny of relevant documentation, observation of parts of lessons and interviews with staff, students and representatives of other organisations who contribute to the promotion of equality throughout the school.

The quality of your provision to promote equalities is good.

Features of good practice observed

- There is extensive and effective support for new arrivals and students who do not speak English as their first language. As a result, this group of potentially vulnerable students makes good progress to any other group.
- The school has extensive links with many outside agencies and professionals involved in the welfare, guidance and support of vulnerable students. These links extend to many organizations and settings which provide education, support and training for vulnerable students on leaving school. In conjunction with Doncaster's Excellence in Cities project, Key Stage 4 students showing signs of disaffection are provided with a widening range of opportunities to experience education and training in settings other than at school whilst continuing their numeracy and literacy studies in school. Many of these

opportunities allow the more vulnerable students to access accreditation more relevant to their needs than could be provided by the school alone. This is contributing to a fall in the number of students dropping out of school before their statutory leaving age.

- The school is an integral part of the Behaviour Improvement Programme within Doncaster. It works particularly closely with feeder primary schools to address potential attendance or behaviour problems before pupils transfer to the larger school. The effectiveness of support for students with behavioural difficulties can be seen in the reducing need for exclusion, which has fallen over each of the past three years
- The school works closely with other schools. These links greatly ease the transition of potentially vulnerable students. A recent innovation has been the creation of the LEAP programme to support lower attaining or less confident students in Year 7. Transition arrangements are carefully planned to aid transfer of vulnerable students from lower to upper school and then on to further education or training. As a result there is minimal interruption to students learning.
- The progress of vulnerable students is closely monitored. The information gained allows the school to quickly identify any who are underachieving. Whole school analysis allows the school to promote equal opportunities for all students by comparing the overall progress of different groups of students. The effectiveness of support for vulnerable students is evident in the fact that in recent years, the progress of students from vulnerable groups has been greater than that of some other groups, and in many cases broadly in line with national expectations.

Areas for development

- In some lessons, insufficient attention is paid to the range of learning difficulty or disability within the class. Occasionally lessons lack challenge, especially when teachers underestimate the ability of students whose first language is not English.
- Participation in extracurricular activities is generally good but information about participation rates in these activities is not sufficiently used to establish how they can be made equally attractive to all groups of students, especially the most vulnerable.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop promoting equalities in your 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

Alastair Younger
Additional Inspector