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Ms J Nolan
Hazel Grove High School
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Dear Ms Nolan

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 the 26 November 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: observing lessons, scrutinising school documentation, discussions with parents, pupils, teachers, managers, governors and other professionals who provide additional support to the pupils in the school.

The quality of provision to promote equalities is good.

Features of good practice observed

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have high expectations for individual student achievement. They are keen to raise the aspirations of students and this has resulted in improved exam results in 2008. Student progress is tracked effectively, making good use of their individual learning targets to measure their progress at regular points during the school year. This information is evaluated effectively by the senior leadership in order to tackle any weaknesses. Staff have high expectations for student achievement. Students themselves know how to achieve their goals. They enjoy school, reporting that they feel well supported and most appreciate the variety of opportunities which exist.
- The leadership places a strong emphasis on the emotional well-being of its students. A Pastoral Support Centre is the hub of this work. The leadership

of this centre is effective. Staff know the students well and make good use of this in planning programmes of intervention for individual students. Heads of Year attend lessons with students to monitor student behaviour and attitudes, liaise with teachers, parents and students and respond quickly to any concerns or issues which arise. They meet regularly in the centre to discuss the needs of students and they liaise exceptionally well with outside agencies, such as CAMHS, the Local Authority Behaviour Support Unit and the Mosaic drugs support unit to name but a few. This means that students are referred quickly to the appropriate professionals and intervention often becomes a preventative measure.

- Multi-agency support meetings are organised by the school to support students and families experiencing difficulties. A range of professionals attend these meetings and as a consequence, the support workers are able to dovetail their work to meet the needs of individuals, offering a bespoke service. The agencies say the school is pro-active in seeking appropriate advice and the students benefit from this open culture in which any issues can be tackled. Interagency work for those students with extreme mental health issues is good and although referrals are high, agencies say this is because the school is recognising the needs of its students.
- Students say they feel confident to visit the centre at any time, to deal with any issues they may have, either inside or outside school. They report that staff always listen carefully and help them to manage their problems. Students appreciate their Heads of Year attending lessons if they are finding relationships difficult. This keeps potential non-attenders in school. Parents like the communication between home and school, saying that staff are very approachable and helpful.
- The care, guidance and support for vulnerable students is good. Students who are at risk of underachieving are identified early as part of the schools' thorough assessment procedures and school is now developing its curriculum for these students. Good liaison between the Heads of Year and form tutors ensures that the needs of vulnerable students are given a high priority. Regular checks are made on their wellbeing and ICT is used effectively by the senior leadership to monitor student attitudes. Students are given ample opportunities in school to complete homework and coursework. Good support arrangements exist at lunchtime, and students report they feel happy and secure. Procedures to safeguard the health and safety and well-being of vulnerable students are well established. Additional support is provided for students from the poorest families, such as providing residential visits and computer access.
- Transition arrangements are good. A learning mentor, who shares her time between the feeder primary schools and Hazel Grove, collects valuable information on the new students. This is used effectively to ensure students are given the appropriate level of challenge in their lessons and to ensure that any social and emotional difficulties recognised in the student's primary schools are taken into account by teaching staff.

Parents say the transition between primary school and Hazel Grove is very good, especially for those students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

- Provision for equality of opportunity is good. The small percentage of students from minority ethnic groups say they feel included in the school community. Their achievement is good. The school ensures that all students are given the opportunity to take part in all school activities, especially residential visits. Positive action is taken to re-motivate students who are disengaged from learning. For example, a recent residential visit by Y11 girls, who are at risk of underachieving, to an outdoor pursuits centre has improved their attendance and attitude. This is enabling them to achieve better results in their academic work. No student is excluded from taking part in visits for financial reasons.
- All students now take qualifications at the end of Year 11 and the increase in options at the end of Year 9, which include work based learning and young apprenticeships is leading to improvements in achievement. Parents are invited to attend option evenings to discuss the different options available to their children. The school works hard to ensure good attendance at these meetings, particularly for the parents of vulnerable students. It makes good use of text messaging and phone calls, to ensure that all parents are aware of their significance in preparing their child for the next stage in their lives. No students left the school as NEETS in 2008.
- The school has a Learning Resource for students with learning difficulties. This is an additionally funded resource base provided for 15 students who live in the Metropolitan Borough of Stockport. Students who attend this resource have a range of difficulties, which include Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome and severe complex learning difficulties. The inclusion of these pupils into the main part of the school is good. Some students attend lessons in the main school as well as in the Resource. They make good progress, overall. Parents say their children enjoy school and they appreciate the care and support provided by the school. They particularly like the open door policy, where they are able to contact the school if they have any concerns and are kept well informed by staff about any issues which occur during the school day. The inclusion of these students in the main part of the school enables students to work together to develop respect, tolerance and understanding.

Areas for development

- Make better use of target setting, particularly for students with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in order that all students can achieve their potential.
- Ensure that all staff make effective use of the information available to them with regard to students individual learning needs to ensure that teaching and learning matches the high quality of the best lessons.

- Improve attendance, particularly of the most vulnerable students, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in their learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop promoting equalities at Hazel Grove High 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

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector