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Ms Libby Lee
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Lee

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 30 September 2008 to look at work in promoting equality.

The visit provided valuable information that 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 discussions with key members of staff, students, parents, carers, governors, key partners and the observation of parts of four lessons.

The quality of provision to promote equalities is outstanding.

Features of good practice observed

- Students who are likely to become disaffected or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified very early. Most frequently this is before they start at the school. Primary to secondary transition work is exemplary. There is very robust monitoring of their academic, personal and social progress, and close collaboration with parents/carers, other education providers and other services for children and young people. As a consequence these students receive speedy and appropriate support before and after they enter the school.
- Students who are at risk of underachieving or who have a learning difficulty and/or disability make good and often very good progress in their learning over time. This is because they are taught very well. Leadership teams

ensure that the skills of individual members of staff are optimised so that in lessons and withdrawal sessions they receive individualised support from highly qualified teaching assistants.

- Very effective utilisation of partnership organisations promotes the school's inclusive vision and increases the achievements of vulnerable groups. A prime example of this is the use of the Skill Force programme. Here students who are the most vulnerable or at risk of exclusion follow a programme that draws together vocational qualifications, community work and life skills both in and outside the classroom. Alongside a flexible curriculum, involving other education providers, the school effectively re-engages such students in their learning. A consequence is that the standard in their work is steadily increasing and more of them pursue further education or training when they leave school.
- Temporary withdrawal from classes and training in life skills helps students change their attitudes and improve their learning. The learning support base (the Green Room) is used very effectively to integrate students at risk of exclusion and provides interactive workshops for those with identified social skills needs. Parents/carers spoke very highly of the termly celebratory lunches that they have in the Green Room where they can network with other parents/carers with similar experiences. The regular contact with an assigned professional ensures that home school liaison is very strong, supportive and fully involves families in the decisions which are made. This makes a significant difference to the life chances of the students involved as well as supporting and involving their families.
- Inclusion is outstanding. Students of all abilities and backgrounds take an active part in school activities and are fully integrated into the life and work of the school. Those students with chronic medical conditions or a physical disability, including wheel-chair users, have high rates of participation in extra curricular physical activities and residential trips. Parents/carers particularly appreciate the way that the school supports students to take care of their own medical conditions and needs.
- The care, guidance and support for vulnerable groups have an outstanding impact on improving their personal development. Redemption and mediation are used as key strategies to challenge and support students' motivation, behaviour and citizenship. Because students can start again with a clean slate if they have 'slipped off the rails' and have a clear understanding of acceptable boundaries, they are in a position to move on with their learning. Students greatly appreciated this and the sixth form is richer for it. Peer mentoring and coaching enables older students to support younger ones who are going through similar difficulties to the ones that they have overcome themselves.
- Interagency work for those students who have extreme mental health issues is very good.
- The school is the designated access school within the Bath area. There is a therapy space available for those who need physical therapies throughout the school day and a lift in one of the buildings.

Areas for development

- Improve the accessibility of the buildings and increase the independence of wheel-chair users so that they are able to open doors for themselves.
- Work with the local authority to identify ways to be kept better informed by social services about changes in support given to students in the school.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to promote equalities in the 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

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector