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Mr F Maguire
Headteacher
Canon Palmer Catholic School
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Dear Mr Maguire

Ofsted subject survey: identifying good practice in promoting equalities

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 February 2009 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, key partners, governors and the observation of parts of four lessons.

The quality of provision to promote equalities is outstanding.

Features of good practice observed

- The ethos of the school is open and welcoming with teaching based on the school's Christian values lying side by side with the Every Child Matters principles. Children are at the heart of planning, teaching and learning. A clear focus on removing barriers for individual children through creative and flexible use of a wide range of support strategies enables pupils to succeed.
- There are high expectations for all – pupils and staff – not only in the quality of teaching, learning and the progress pupils are expected to make, but also in the expectation that all members of the school community will treat each other with respect. As a result, pupils reported very few issues related to bullying or racism and any that arose were swiftly and appropriately dealt with. Pupils are very proud

of the level of understanding they have of different cultures and how well they all get on together. They say they feel very safe in school and enjoy their time at school.

- Pupils and parents value the open door policy in the school. Parents feel they can raise concerns easily and they are responded to swiftly and effectively. Pupils are confident that there is always someone they can talk to if they are worried about anything at school or at home. Pupils are provided with support and strategies to enable them to resolve many problems themselves.
- Pupils who may miss school because of medical needs receive excellent support. Arrangements for home tuition are made swiftly and the flexibility and sensitivity shown in helping these pupils return to school is impressive. Pupils who are missing school are encouraged to visit at break or lunchtimes if they are well enough in order to maintain social contact with their friends. Staff and pupils visit their friends in hospital and at home. Parents could not speak highly enough of the support the school had provided for their children and themselves in some very difficult circumstances.
- Pupils arriving in the school outside the usual admission times, often from abroad and speaking little or no English, are provided with good support. Assessments identify which pupils require specific help to acquire or extend their English skills and these pupils make good progress, especially with spoken English. The school also supports parents to improve their English skills so they, in turn, may help their own children, by arranging ESOL classes with a local primary school.
- The achievement and engagement of pupils from African Caribbean backgrounds has been improved through the Aim Higher project. This was developed as a whole school project and resulted in each department considering what changes to the curriculum and teaching resources were required. The learning from the project has now been embedded in whole school planning, resources and the curriculum.
- Success is routinely acknowledged and celebrated, not only in terms of academic progress but also in attendance, effort and out of school activities. Parents value the frequent communication with school which keeps them informed of their child's progress but also the positive letters and certificates which are sent to the home.
- After school and out of school activities are open to all pupils, enhance their engagement with other pupils and extend their knowledge and understanding of different cultures. No pupil is barred from these activities because of financial constraints.

Areas for development

- Monitor the take up of after school and out of school activities to ensure that particular groups are not under represented or not

accessing the opportunities available. Take appropriate steps to try to overcome any barriers to participation identified by this monitoring.

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.

Ofsted gathers information on the immediate and longer-term impact of survey inspections, both on the institutions themselves, and with a view to improving its own processes. To this end, we should be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the next ten days. We have also just sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Please return your completed questionnaire to either the email or postal address on the form, not to us. We may also contact some schools by telephone after several months in order for us to gain a picture of longer-term impact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Anita Wade
Her Majesty's Inspector