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Mrs Fitz-Gibbon
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fitz-Gibbon

Ofsted survey inspection programme – healthy eating in schools

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, students and parents, during my visit with my colleagues from the School Food Trust on 6 October 2009 to look at your work on healthier eating and school food provision.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified within the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with groups of parents, students and staff; scrutiny of school documentation, including policies and schemes of work; and observation of two food technology lessons and the dining room at lunchtime.

The quality of provision to promote healthy eating

The quality of provision to promote healthy eating is good.

Compliance with the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF's) food-based and nutrient-based standards for school food

Compliance with the DCSF's food-based and nutrient-based standards for school food is good.

- The new standards came into force in September 2009. The school has worked well with the local authority to make the transition from the previous school meal service as smooth as possible. As a result, the

proportion of students taking a school meal has remained consistent at approximately 42%.

- The school fully meets the food-based standards. Almost all of the nutrient-based standards are met. The only main exception is the amount of iron in school meals which is slightly under the recommended amount. There is an effective plan in place to increase the amount of iron in school meals within the next few months.

The quality of the dining experience

The quality of the dining experience is satisfactory and the quality of food is good.

- Although the dining room is small, the atmosphere in the room is calm and students are well behaved, independent and responsible.
- The size of the room and the use of space are currently hampering the catering staff's ability to serve meals quickly. Many students have to wait too long before they are served. This is hindering the school's attempts to increase the proportion of students taking a school meal because students are reluctant to wait for so long.
- Issues about the dining room were raised by the school council in 2007. However, similar issues remain, particularly about the logistics of queuing for a meal and the quality and quantity of food left towards the end of service.
- There are a few well-placed signs and posters to prompt students into making a healthy choice. However, opportunities to link the dining experience to work in lessons, and to promote healthy eating and healthier lunchboxes, are missed.

Helping students and parents to make healthier choices

Strategies for helping students and parents to make healthier choices are satisfactory.

- Parents and students were consulted in the past about the content of meals and the quality of the dining experience. However, the school and catering service do not use the opportunities to seek, and act on, the views of different groups of students, for example those eligible to take a free school meal, students from minority ethnic backgrounds, and students not taking a meal.
- Parents have been involved in shaping some aspects of the school's provision, but they have been less informed and supported on how to help students to prepare a healthy lunchbox, for example.

Development of students' knowledge and personal skills

The development of students' knowledge and personal skills is good.

- Students are able to prepare healthy meals with fresh, unprocessed ingredients.
- Students have the knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a healthy meal and are able to create and present well-cooked meals in food technology lessons.

Teaching about healthier eating

Teaching about healthier eating is good.

- Students make good progress in lessons because they are taught well. Resources such as the 'eat well plate' are used effectively to teach students about healthy meals. Students make good progress in their knowledge of the mineral and vitamin content of food and the effect that salt and saturated fat, for example, have on the body..
- Activities in lessons are planned and designed well. Time is maximised to enable students to work in a practical way throughout the lesson. Teachers monitor the room well, providing individuals with targeted questions which help them think, explain and be creative.

Planning the curriculum

Planning the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is designed well. Strong links are made between science, personal and social education and food technology, to provide students with a coherent experience and enable them to make progress from year to year.
- Activities and the curriculum enable students to think creatively, for example by re-designing the menu at Hogwarts to make it healthier.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The leadership and management of the curriculum and teaching and learning is good.
- The school and the provider work together to monitor the uptake of school meals. However, this has not been broken down effectively to monitor the uptake for different groups of students. Students have not been involved as much as they could be in shaping and improving the dining experience.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include the need to:

- improve the dining experience for students by:
 - reducing the time students queue

- providing stimulating and interesting displays that link healthy eating to the curriculum and promote healthy meals and lunch boxes
- improving the eating environment

- enable students and parents to have a greater say in shaping and improving provision.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop healthier eating and provision for food in the school.

As I explained during the feedback, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector