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Mrs E Tough
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Tough

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 colleague from the School Food Trust on 12 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. Any published report is likely to list the names of the institutions visited but we would not identify individual institutions within the report itself.

The evidence base used to inform the judgements made included interviews with you, staff and students; scrutiny of school documentation including curriculum plans; analysis of students' work; and observation of four lessons, breakfast club, break and lunch time.

I undertook to provide a brief written version of the main points made in our feedback at the end of the visit, to support development in healthier eating and school meals.

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's (DCSF) food-based and nutrient-based standards for school food

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

- The school complies with all aspects of the nutrient-based standards for school lunches except that the school lunch menu cycle is eight weeks rather than between one to four weeks, as defined by the school food regulations.
- The food and drink provided at the breakfast club, mid-morning break and in the vending machines complies with food-based standards for school food other than lunch.

The quality of the dining experience

The quality of the dining experience is good.

- The dining room is clean and bright with a queuing system and notices helping students to select a 'meal deal' in an orderly manner. The new electronic payment system helps speed up the process. Students enjoy sitting with friends. Blackboards give daily information on the food offered but, since the serving area is quite small, students cannot see exactly what is on offer before they need to make a choice. There are a lot of lovely options but some students are a bit overwhelmed and tend to revert to similar things each day. Staff set a good example by regularly eating in the dining room.

Helping students and parents to make healthier choices

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

- School meals offer good value for money.
- Parents are pleased with the food provided and feel that students receive clear consistent messages about healthy eating. Those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are seen as being well supported to make healthier choices. Parents valued being able to access a printout of what their children eat so they can further support healthy eating at home. School meals offer good value for money.

Development of students' knowledge and personal skills

Development of students' knowledge and personal skills is good.

- Students develop good hands-on skills in their food and nutrition classes. They make a good variety of food from fresh ingredients and are well aware of the content and health promoting features of what they make. Students understand the importance of healthy eating; it is evident that the message is reinforced in their science, personal, social and health education (PHSE) as well as in physical education.

Teaching about healthier eating

Teaching about healthier eating is good.

- Teaching encourages a thoughtful approach to issues. Those students undertaking a simulation exercise looking at the ways to make the fish stock sustainable were able to appreciate the various issues as well as understanding how Omega 3 helps support health. Younger students considered the importance of fibre in the diet when sorting out what proportion of food groups should be consumed. The 'five a day message' encouraging them to eat more fruit and vegetables is taught well. Displays of students' work also promote healthy eating messages effectively.

Planning the curriculum

Planning the curriculum is outstanding.

- The subject departments avoid repetition and ensure that each new unit adds a different dimension to the students' understanding of their bodies, health and nutrition. Students are introduced to increasingly more detail as they mature. High-quality lesson planning was observed and tasks are well adapted to engage all students. Science experiments are powerful tools to aid understanding, while social and emotional elements are covered in a strong PHSE programme. Students have a wonderful opportunity to understand food production and how healthy food is grown in Britain when they go on a residential experience in a farming area.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The school has an appropriate food policy and is proactive in addressing the latest developments and requirements. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award amongst others and takes a holistic approach to student welfare. Students appreciate how the food has improved. Staff ensure students with special learning needs are supported well. The pastoral system is responsive and good evidence was seen showing how well the school responds to support individual needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- supporting students to make healthy meal choices that reflect the balance of items on the 'eat well plate'
- considering providing photographs of food or signs that encourage pupils to select a balance of items as shown on the 'eat well plate'
- encouraging more students to try school lunches, to improve the uptake

- ensuring all those eligible for free school lunches are encouraged to try them.

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, this letter will be copied 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

Mo Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector