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Mrs E Warner
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Warner

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 13 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 nominated staff, a group of parents and two groups of students; scrutiny of school documentation; observation of two lessons; and observation of the school's before-school, break-time and lunchtime food provision.

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 satisfactory.

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 final food-based standards for lunches were met in full. The nutrient-based standards for lunches were met in full, with the exception of a very minor shortfall in iron. Food-based standards for food, other than lunches, were met for breakfast and break provision, but there was no evidence of coordination of other food provided by the school to meet these standards, and some items provided were not compliant.

The quality of the dining experience

The quality of the dining experience is good.

- The dining room is spacious, airy, bright and well maintained. The time allocated for the mid-day meal is appropriate.
- Students are able to sit with their friends and eat without being rushed.
- Information on the meals that are on offer is displayed well enabling students to make appropriate choices.

Helping students and parents to make healthier choices

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

- Most new students receive information on school meals in the form of brochures. However, not all are clear on what foods and drinks they are allowed to bring to school.
- Good arrangements for Year 7 students to dine early allow them time to consider their meal choices.
- Some information on food provision is communicated to parents and students through the school's newsletters. Parental views are not yet taken into account, but there are plans to do so.
- Students with eating disorders are supported by the health mentor.

Development of students' knowledge and personal skills

Development of students' knowledge and personal skills is good.

- There is a good take-up of extra-curricular sporting activities by students but some opportunities to promote healthy eating in the course of these are missed.
- In lessons, students spoke confidently about making sensible food choices and had opportunities to make healthy meals in food technology.

Teaching about healthier eating

Teaching about healthier eating is good.

- Teaching ensures that students know what foods contribute to a healthy lifestyle. A good example of this is the 'healthy breakfast' topic.
- Food technology lessons provide good opportunities for students to choose healthy recipes and to prepare them safely.

Planning the curriculum

Planning the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school does not yet have a food policy. Nonetheless, the promotion of healthy eating is well integrated into a number of subjects, such as science, physical education and geography.
- The school draws satisfactorily on the advice of health and catering professionals but there is scope to make more use of their expertise.
- The school uses less widely-accepted concepts of healthier eating, such as the 'food pyramid', although in some subjects the more informative 'eat well plate' approach is used.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- You have ensured that the school has a sound view of how healthy foods can be promoted but this has yet to be drawn up into a food policy that can be shared with students and parents.
- The school does not yet have an overall coordinator to oversee the consistent promotion of healthy eating.
- Vulnerable students are generally well supported through the good pastoral system. However, the school does not yet monitor the take up of school meals by students, including those who are vulnerable.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- appointing a healthy schools coordinator to lead this area of school life
- drawing up a food policy that can be shared with students and parents
- ensuring that all food provision complies with the school food standards.

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

Michael McIlroy
Her Majesty's Inspector