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Ms J Packer
Primary Pupil Referral Unit
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Dear Ms Packer

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: healthy eating in schools

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit with my colleague from the School Food Trust on 16 November 2009 to look at your work on healthier eating and school food provision.

The visit provided valuable information which 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 within the main text.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: discussion with pupils and staff; scrutiny of school documentation including your school evaluation and school food policy; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of two lessons, breakfast provision, snack time and school lunch.

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 with outstanding features.

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 lunches demonstrate compliance within the planned three-week-menu cycle against each of the 14 nutrient standards.
- The food and drink provided at breakfast and at break were fully compliant with the food-based standards for all school food other than lunches. However, there is insufficient formal monitoring of this to show compliance over time.

The quality of the dining experience

The quality of the dining experience is outstanding.

- The dining area is clean, bright and inviting. It forms a warm and welcoming area for pupils to meet staff at the start of day if they attend the breakfast provision. The staff work well with every pupil to ensure they have good information from which to make their choices. The bright tableware and good displays enhance the pupils' experience and make food service a very pleasant part of the day where a lot of informal learning is gained.

Helping pupils and parents to make healthier choices

Strategies for helping pupils and parents to make healthier choices are outstanding.

- Kitchen, teaching and support staff work in harmony promoting fruit as part of breakfast and vegetables as part of lunch. They encourage pupils to try small amounts of unfamiliar items. Parents are given personalised support through the referral units' work with them on a variety of issues. They come for celebration meals and, sometimes, to see their child cooking in the on-site family style 'Blue' kitchen. Parents receive the lunch menus and good information about the meal service. All pupils eat the healthy cooked lunch provided.

Development of pupils' knowledge and personal skills

Development of pupils' knowledge and personal skills is outstanding.

- Pupils are made aware, from a young age, about what is healthy. They benefit from extensive practical activities, especially, the regular group cooking of healthy food, such as, vegetable kebabs. In older classes, they learn what makes a balanced meal and how to select the healthier options when eating in fast-food chains. On a recent educational visit, they had an opportunity to put this into practice. In lessons, they learn aspects of budgeting, the guideline for daily amounts of each food type as well as which foods are rich in vitamins. Pupils are interested and engaged in this work and they make excellent strides in their learning and behaviour.

Teaching about healthier eating

Teaching about healthier eating is outstanding.

- Teaching is based on individual assessments of what pupils know about healthy eating when they arrive in the unit. Pupils enjoy doing this assessment by computer and are keen to know if they were improving. Lessons are exceptionally well-planned and delivered. Pupils have made lovely displays to help reinforce the health messages and to encourage them to cooperate together in doing their work. The next steps in learning are promoted well by a teaching approach that also builds confidence through the practical activities. Pupils' skills in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology develop very well, while staff also focus appropriately on pupils' behavioural and social skills.

Planning the curriculum

Planning of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The school takes the teaching of healthy lifestyles very seriously and has done so for many years. It employs the cook directly because the pupil numbers are too limited to make it viable for a commercial firm. This term it has a half-term focus on healthy food as it recognises that poor nutrition may impact on pupils' behaviour. Teachers and support assistants continually reinforce healthy-eating messages and are good role-models. The science unit taught in mainstream schools has been carefully adapted to the circumstances and needs of the pupils. Consistent messages are taught and these are explicitly linked to helping pupils grow in independence and are followed through during practical opportunities.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- You, your senior team and management committee see eating healthily as a cornerstone of the education the unit provides. The kitchen team willingly spends time helping younger pupils to make sensible choices from the delicious food on offer. The positive approach to health and well-being is promoted effectively by all involved but, as yet, the school lacks formal monitoring that goes across all the food provided in the day. The management committee visit the cooking lessons and have appropriate general oversight but do not have systems in place to monitor the new food standards rigorously enough throughout the school day.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further coordinating information about all food provided to ensure that the food and drink provided are monitored and remain fully compliant with the food-based 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

Mo Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector