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Mrs B Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Ofsted 2009-10 subject 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 18 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: interviews with nominated staff and two groups of students; scrutiny of school documentation including schemes of work and the school's self-evaluation; analysis of students' work; and observation of two lessons and the school's dinnertime arrangements.

I undertook to provide a brief written version of the main points, made in the 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' (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 inadequate.

- The lunchtime provision was not compliant with the food-based standards, as meat products and deep-fried foods are provided too frequently and oily fish is not provided within the three-week menu cycle. The provision of vegetables and salad needs to be increased each day.
- The introduction of a new catering provider has been delayed, and the existing lunchtime menu-cycle has not been analysed against the nutrient-based standards, so there is no evidence available to demonstrate that the nutrient-based standards are met.
- The food provided at the breakfast club and at mid-morning break complies with the food-based standards for all food other than lunches.

The quality of the dining experience

The quality of the dining experience is satisfactory.

- Despite the limited dining space available to the school, students who take school dinners are able to enjoy lunchtimes satisfactorily. They are able to sit and chat with their friends and are able to change easily between having school dinners and packed lunches. However, there is scope to speed up the procedures by which students pay for their food.
- There is a separate and appropriate dining space for students who eat packed lunches.

Helping students and parents to make healthier choices

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

- Students receive advice about healthy eating through assemblies and talks by local charities and health professionals. Further advice is given to both students and parents on the suitability of food and drinks through newsletters.
- There is a satisfactory level of displays about healthy eating around the school and in the dining hall.
- Menus are not shared in advance with students and parents. There are few strategies to encourage students to eat more vegetables or salads with their meals.

Development of students' knowledge and personal skills

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

- Students have a good understanding of healthy eating and of hygiene procedures, including when preparing food. They know that regular exercise contributes to a healthy lifestyle and that a good diet complements prowess in sporting activities.
- Students have good opportunities to prepare healthy food and can talk confidently about how food products can be made healthier.

Teaching about healthier eating

Teaching about healthier eating is good.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Lessons that involve aspects about healthier eating are prepared well and provide good explanations for students, for example on how food labelling can be interpreted.
- Food technology lessons provide good opportunities for students to make healthy food products. There is a strong insistence on students learning and following effective hygiene and food-handling procedures.

Planning the curriculum

Planning the curriculum is good.

- Healthy eating is taught mainly through food technology, biology and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Biology and PSHE contain substantial study units on healthy eating. All students in Key Stage 3 study food technology and older students can study this to GCSE level. Aspects of healthy eating are also taught in a number of other subjects such as Hebrew studies, geography and German.
- The 'eat well' plate is featured prominently around the school and this is consistent with the Government's health messages.
- Students have access to chilled water at lunchtimes and during the day.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The school has not put in place the food-based standards, which were required to have been implemented in 2006. However, it has taken action to improve the quality of meals and a new catering company is due to begin providing school meals in the very near future.
- An interim food policy has been drawn up, but this is yet to be shared with parents and students.
- A number of surveys on food provision have been undertaken to ascertain the views of parents and students, and food issues are discussed at a staff-parent liaison group.
- Vulnerable students are monitored well through the school's pastoral and biometric dinner payment systems.

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

- work with the new catering provider to ensure that the food-based and nutrient-based standards for school lunches are met, and that evidence is available to demonstrate compliance with these standards
- consider an additional biometric till in the dining hall

- work with the catering provider to ensure that menus are made more available to students and parents so that both have more information with which to make informed choices on healthy eating.

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 made available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy
Her Majesty's Inspector