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Mrs M McCorry
Headteacher
Sir Thomas Wharton Community College
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Dear Mrs McCorry

Ofsted 2009-10 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 12 January 2010 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 staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of two lessons.

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.

- The college provides a good dining experience. All students are encouraged to make healthy choices and more vulnerable students are monitored to ensure their dietary needs are met.
- Teaching about healthy eating and the development of students knowledge and skills are 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 college has been working towards compliant menus since 2006. Both the set-meal menu and the meal-deal menu are individually compliant as well as the overall school menu. Evidence was provided to show that all the nutrient-based standards for school lunches were met.
- Regular inspections of the kitchen are carried out to ensure that food items meet the standards and that the quality of food being produced is of a high standard.

The quality of the dining experience

The quality of the dining experience is good.

- Meals are well presented. The room is not too noisy and students are generally well behaved. There is some queuing but there is sufficient time for all to get a meal.
- There are no menus on display or labelling on the food but catering staff are happy to talk to students about the food and ingredients. Vegetarian food is available but it is not always labelled as such.
- Catering staff are friendly and encourage students to eat healthier options. However, there are few healthy eating messages displayed in the dining area or around the college.

Helping students and parents to make healthier choices

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

- The college is at an early stage of producing a food policy which involves parents and students in activities such as menu planning.
- Parents have received a healthy eating leaflet from the school but no guidance on producing healthy lunch boxes. Parents are aware of the college's views about vending machines and keeping students on-site during lunch to prevent them from buying unhealthy food from local outlets.

Development of students' knowledge and personal skills

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

- Teachers use an audit to ensure all healthy eating topics are covered through personal, social and health education (PSHE), food technology, and science.
- Food technology teachers are aware of the food standards which inform their planning; PSHE tackles issues such as body image, and science

lessons include the study of food groups, nutrition, food labelling, diet and exercise.

Teaching about healthier eating

Teaching about healthier eating is good.

- Students have practical experience of cooking from Year 7. Lessons are planned well to meet students' needs with helpful materials to support their understanding of healthy options. Modules of work include, the importance of eating breakfast, fruit tasting, modifying menus and improving school dinners and the dangers of fast food.
- The college has begun to plan a health focused 'super learning day' for the summer term which will include subjects working together to deliver health-related outcomes including healthy eating.

Planning of the curriculum

The planning of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Although the curriculum is taught in food technology, PSHE and science lessons, the college is in the early stages of systematic planning and monitoring of healthy lifestyle messages across the whole curriculum. This is underway as part of the college's bid for Healthy School status.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The college is aware of their strengths and areas for development and have put effective strategies in place. All departments and senior leaders have received in-house professional development on their contribution to the Healthy School standard.
- The college rightly prides itself on its inclusive ethos and this is evident in the strenuous efforts made to ensure that the more vulnerable students do not miss out on healthy options. Parents are helped to register for free school meals and catering staff monitor the choices of vulnerable students, such as those with eating issues, on free lunches or in local authority care, to ensure they have adequate food intake, make healthy food choices and do not skip meals.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- having more healthy eating messages on display in the dining area and around the college
- better promotion of menus and the labelling of ingredients, particularly vegetarian options
- involving students and parents more in menu planning.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, 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

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector