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Ms Knight
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Dear Ms Knight

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) - three year longitudinal survey

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my recent visit to look at work in ESD in your school.

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 in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term. This is a follow up monitoring visit which is intended to assess the progress the school has made in developing ESD throughout the school since the previous visit.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of two lessons, and a survey of the school environment.

The school has made some remarkable progress since the last visit to promote ESD throughout the school. The overall effectiveness is now judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in ESD are satisfactory overall with some aspects being good.

- The higher profile for ESD throughout the school has raised overall awareness of sustainability issues. Most students have a satisfactory understanding of environmental responsibilities. A small but increasingly influential group are more actively involved.

- There is growing evidence of behaviour change. The whole school initiative to reduce energy costs has been very successful with students taking an active lead. The 20% reduction in energy costs is remarkable and shows what students can achieve when they are determined to make a difference.
- Students show a greater awareness of the need to stay healthy. Improvements, recommended by the students themselves, to the quality of food in the school canteen are encouraging a greater take-up of healthier meals. However, some students, notably boys, still prefer unhealthy options.
- The school reports improved behaviour since the previous visit and students agree. They remark that the greater reference to sustainability issues in some subjects especially geography, science and PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) is seen as having real relevance and is more engaging leading to a greater willingness to learn.
- Scrutiny of students' work in geography and especially the applied Science GCSE (21st Century Science) has shown greater depth and quality to their work when sustainability issues have been studied. For example, the coursework on biodiversity enabled students to pursue more personalised approaches and resulted in improved standards.
- The issue of litter has improved but still remains a problem.
- Cultural understanding remains a weakness. The school recognises this and is implementing strategies to improve this aspect.

Quality of teaching and learning of ESD

Too few ESD related lessons were observed to make a firm judgement on the quality of teaching and learning in ESD. However, some good and outstanding teaching was observed in geography where students explored ethical issues linked to exploitation of child labour in India while others participated in an excellent debate on the issues arising from the development of the rainforest. There is a strong commitment to continue to develop new teaching and learning approaches with a greater emphasis on challenge, enquiry and personalised learning. This is beginning to have an impact particularly in reducing the dependency culture previously evident.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- There are more opportunities for students to learn about sustainable issues both through the formal and informal curriculum. ESD is a key focus in geography, science and PSHE although it remains less evident in other subjects.
- Good use is being made of focus days to raise awareness of sustainability. Students are able to study road safety linked to travel to

school as well as topics linked to health and the environment. This is supporting more widespread behaviour change.

- Students are able to develop awareness of diversity and other cultures specifically in RE and geography. However, in other subjects this remains more limited.
- Small numbers of students are involved in extra curricular projects, such as the 'Gardening Club' which promote ESD values. The school is aware of the need to involve more students actively.
- Good use is being made of the Science specialism to improve links and promote ESD with partner primary schools. For example, the 'Science Challenge' has raised awareness of global problems linked to the issue of safe drinking water.

Leadership and management of ESD

Leadership and management of ESD are outstanding.

- The school visibly promotes ESD. The Senior Management team is actively promoting ESD as a significant school initiative and has successfully raised the profile. The appointment of a senior manager to co-ordinate activities is a positive statement of intent.
- Senior managers are actively interested in promoting projects which link into and promote sustainability values. For example, the 'critical thinking and race equalities' pilot, although embryonic, promotes diversity, equity and justice.
- A positive and caring culture is actively being promoted around the school which links well with the sustainable schools ethos of 'care for oneself, each other and the environment'.
- Sustainability is identified as a priority in the School Development Plan, particularly in developing student voice and in encouraging greater involvement of the pupils in community projects.
- The School Council is developing into a more representative and influential group. It has been actively involved in promoting the school to enable it to achieve 'National Healthy Schools' status. Students have also been instrumental in improving the quality of food in the school canteen as well as advising on improvements around the school including the library.
- Student voice is well supported and complemented by year councils, the sports council, the environmental council, the school nutrition group as well as other focus groups. These enable students to actively participate in decision making.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good overall.

- The enquiry based approach being encouraged, especially in geography and science, encourages all students to become less reliant on their teachers. Disengaged students are more motivated by the relevance of the topics and more able students achieve well.
- The mentoring programme encourages students to take greater responsibility for their actions and for each other.
- The traveller culture within the school is recognized and celebrated.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- promoting ESD more effectively through a greater range of subjects, notably design and technology
- expanding the range of enrichment and extra curricular opportunities to encourage more students to participate
- extending the range of collaborative activities which promote ESD in partnership with other schools, notably feeder primaries; in particular the school council could work more closely with the pupil council at the adjacent St Nicholas' Primary School to develop and encourage good practice
- develop international links to more actively promote the global dimension
- extending the range of resources which can be reused or recycled.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ESD 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 Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow
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Specialist Adviser for Geography and ESD