

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr Ray Doe
Headteacher
Ridgefield Primary School
Radegund Road
Cambridge
CB1 3RJ

Dear Mr Doe

Ofsted Survey Inspection Programme 2006/7: Healthier Eating in Schools

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 01 February 2007 to look at your work on healthier eating and school meals.

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. Thank you, in particular, for the resources you gave to me which could be used in case studies.

The evidence base used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with yourself, Cambridge Catering Service, Health Promoting school staff, subject coordinators and Year 1, 2 and 6 pupils; scrutiny of school documentation; observation of four lessons; and lunch in the dining room with the school council.

I undertook to provide a brief written version of the main points made in my feedback at the end of the visit, to support development in healthier eating and school meals.

The overall effectiveness of school meal provision is good.

- The standard of school meals is good.

The food served in school meets the new standards. The meals are produced by Cambridge Catering Service and cooked on the premises. The food served is tasty and nutritious and liked by pupils. Although the number taking school meals had gone down, the situation is now beginning to improve and about a third of pupils take school lunches. Menus are not displayed prominently enough in the dining hall.

- The quality of the dining experience is satisfactory.

The length of the lunch break is sufficient for pupils to eat their food properly and some staff eat with the pupils. Pupils are able to sit with friends bringing packed lunches. There is a rota system in operation but it is very slow and results in food going cold. Supervisors do not encourage pupils to leave once they have finished eating. This results in some boisterous behaviour in the rather cramped space.

- Helping pupils and parents to make healthier choices

This aspect is satisfactory. The school has just joined the National Healthy School Programme (NHSP) and is aware of its role in promoting healthier eating habits. Pupils are encouraged to make healthy choices through the Fruit and Vegetable scheme, the Playing for Success modules and well taught lessons. The school association has set up a breakfast club to meet the needs of pupils. Some advice has been provided to parents through the school newsletter about healthy packed lunches but this has not had much impact and many packed lunches contained white bread, crisps, sweetened drinks and chocolate bars.

- Developing pupils' knowledge and personal skills is good.

Pupils have good knowledge and understanding about balanced diets and healthy eating, gained from a range of subjects. Even the five year olds know why it is important to eat fruit and vegetables. Pupils in Year 6 have a mature understanding of food groups and what they do for the body. Many of the older pupils apply their knowledge by not eating as many sweets and restricting trips to fast food outlets. They follow basic hygiene rules because hand washing is emphasised consistently across the school and reinforced by the school nurse.

- Teaching about healthier eating is good.

Teachers are enthusiastic and committed. They strive to make lessons interesting and imaginative. Lessons seen were well planned and teachers had good classroom control and discipline. There were good sessions seen in the Foundation Stage, where children were eating their fruit and discussing its benefits with their teachers. Outstanding teaching was seen in a Year 6 lesson, where crystal clear explanations and well differentiated tasks resulted in pupils making rapid progress in identifying the different food groups.

- Planning of the curriculum is good.

There are good links between subjects but the school does not yet have a whole school food policy. This is planned for when the school's Health Promotion working party is up and running. The healthy eating message is a strong aspect of the curriculum and comes through practical food-related activities in the Foundation Stage, regular cooking in food technology lessons and weekly cooking for pupils in the speech and language unit.

- Managing the school's approach to healthier eating

This aspect is good. Healthy eating is a priority for the leadership and, when the school was set up, the headteacher insisted on proper kitchen facilities being included. A teaching assistant who is also a governor is leading on the NHSP development alongside the deputy headteacher and they have both received high quality training. Take-up and quality of school meals are monitored and there is some useful analysis of nutritional values. Pupils taking free school meals are dealt with sensitively and parents are encouraged to claim this benefit without stigma. Minority ethnic children are well integrated but the menus provided do not really cater for diversity.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the slow service in the dining hall
- providing more advice and guidance to parents about packed lunches.

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

As I explained during the feedback, this letter will be copied to your Local Authority and will be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools