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Mr Stringer
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Stringer

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTC)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 14 June 2007 to look at the way that learning outside the classroom contributes to your school's curriculum and to pupils' achievement and personal development.

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 are published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff, a governor and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of some lessons and seeing the school at work.

The overall effectiveness of the contribution made by learning outside the classroom to the curriculum was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards, including personal development

- Standards have risen in English, mathematics and science and are now significantly above average. This is because of the highly innovative curriculum of which LOTC is an intrinsic part.
- The achievement of boys when writing and that of the more able has improved considerably.

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school because of its exciting curriculum. In consequence attendance is above the national average and behaviour and attitudes to work are excellent.
- The many opportunities offered to pupils for LOTC mean that they are well prepared for the future. They take an active part in the life of the community. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe and know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.
- During creativity week, pupils make rapid progress in English, art and design, and design and technology following the recent visit to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Pupils talked knowledgeably about sculptors and their work.

Quality of teaching and learning within LOTC

- All teachers consistently and effectively include LOTC activities in their planning.
- The content and quality of pupils' work is enriched by the many opportunities staff provide for them to learn from first hand experience.
- Teachers successfully use many opportunities outside the classroom to give pupils the opportunity to apply and refine skills learnt in the classroom.

Quality of the contribution made by LOTC to the curriculum

- The school has a highly innovative curriculum with LOTC as a major feature. This is fully integrated into the curriculum because you consider it essential to pupils' achievement and personal development.
- The range and opportunity for pupils to be involved in out of school hours learning (OSHL) is outstanding with the majority of pupils participating.
- You are rightly disappointed that a minority of pupils do not become involved in these activities.
- Very effective use is made of the local environment for LOTC activities, including geography field work in a local shopping centre and the Victorian trail in Chesterfield.
- Pupils have exciting opportunities for extended visits which contribute to their future well being, for example the trip to France this year.
- The school grounds are used regularly for LOTC activities. However further use could be made of them when teaching some features of the history and geography curriculum.

Leadership and management of LOTC

- You and other senior staff give a very strong lead in creating an innovative and wide-ranging curriculum in which LOTC is an integral part.
- You have developed effective methods of evaluating the impact and quality of LOTC activities.
- Staff work together successfully in ensuring that LOTC activities improve the rate of pupils' progress and their personal development.

- The school has rigorous health and safety procedures for LOTC activities that are checked by governors and the local authority.

Inclusion

- Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities have full access to all activities offered by the school. They gain the opportunity to develop skills not so easily promoted in the classroom. For example, one pupil was found to have a skill for photography on a recent school visit.
- You have successfully overcome financial barriers to ensure all pupils can participate in activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- identifying reasons why some pupils do not get involved in out of school hours learning activities in order to try to include them
- making more use of the school grounds in subject areas where they are not yet used.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop 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

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector