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Mrs Buckingham  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Buckingham

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.

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

Since the last visit, sustainability has not been a considered priority as the school has experienced a great deal of upheaval and change. The school has successfully focused on raising standards and achievement and limited progress has been made in developing ESD throughout the school. However, some good practice was maintained. The overall effectiveness in promoting sustainability is judged to be satisfactory.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in ESD are satisfactory overall.

- The pupils are aware of aspects of sustainability. They are conscious of the need to recycle, conserve energy and to a lesser extent reuse resources sensibly.
- Although they are aware of the need to live sustainable lives, they have not translated this into their learning. There is less evidence of behaviour change. For example lunchboxes, often do not reflect healthy eating. Too many include crisps, chocolate and processed snacks as well as excessive packaging.
- The 'Bike it' campaign and pupils' involvement in research for the school travel plan have raised awareness of the value of walking and biking to school. This is well organised and reinforced through good learning and has been successful in reducing car use, although concerns still remain about ensuring 'safe routes' and congestion around the school.
- Pupils, on the whole, act responsibly and behaviour is good. They respect their environment and are proud of the extensive and well maintained school grounds. The ethos of the school is positive and welcoming.
- Pupils are aware of the need to look after their environment and the school grounds are litter free.

## Quality of teaching and learning of ESD

Insufficient ESD related lessons were observed to make a firm judgement on the quality of teaching. Evidence through observation and discussions with pupils suggests that the quality of learning is satisfactory overall.

- Pupils enjoy finding out about distant localities but they don't fully understand the purpose. They are excited by the growing school links with their partner school in the Gambia for example. However, there is a tendency to focus on differences and the exotic rather than exploring similarities, interdependence and the value of cultural diversity.
- Too often, there is insufficient focus on 'learning'. The emphasis is frequently on gathering information rather than about developing critical thinking which encourages pupils to put forward their own ideas and values. Where enquiry is encouraged girls tend to be more expansive in their thinking; boys are more minimalist.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support. Classroom relationships are good.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the ESD curriculum is satisfactory.

- Recently, school priorities have focused on improving standards and achievement and this has restricted curriculum innovation. There are plans to embed ESD more fully into the curriculum by the end of 2008.
- Currently, there is no consistency or progression in delivery of ESD across the curriculum although there is some evidence in some of the units of work where sustainability can be delivered.
- The global dimension is more strongly emphasised than any other aspect of ESD because of the developing links with the school in the Gambia and the teaching of French and to a lesser extent Spanish.
- The potential to further develop the global dimension is good. This can be achieved by identifying and developing common teaching themes with partner schools and through exchanging pupils' work.
- A large site adjacent to the school is being developed to create an outdoor classroom. This provides a real resource which has the potential to make learning more practical and relevant for the pupils.
- Pupils benefit from a number of visits, for example to local farms. These raise their awareness of organic foods, healthy eating and an understanding where their food comes from. Greater use could be made of the rich rural environment in the immediate locality to develop this further.

## Leadership and management of ESD

Leadership and management of ESD are satisfactory.

- The school self review has identified accurately where aspects of ESD are being promoted well, such as through the travel plan, the 'Bike it' campaign and the growing links with schools abroad. However, it also identifies where more could be done and the intention is to identify clear opportunities in the new school development plan to promote ESD more actively.
- As a priority, you have focused on improving standards and achievement and recent results show this is having an impact. There is now a growing commitment to promote ESD, which is seen as providing a real and relevant context to support improvements in learning.
- The 'Green Team' is active in managing the recycling and auditing energy and resource use.
- The school council has been actively involved in making recommendations and planning the outdoor learning area. There is currently, a duplication and blurring of responsibility between the school council and the 'Green Team'. Their work would benefit from greater co-ordination.

## Inclusion

The provision linked to ESD is good.

- Good and effective use is made of classroom assistants to support those pupils with disabilities or behavioural or learning needs.
- Effective systems are in place such as peer mentoring. This offers mutual support for pupils who have concerns or feel they are facing difficulties. Pupils care for and respect each other.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- incorporating ESD into the new school development plan to affirm its importance in creating an ethos of care in the school. This should identify clear responsibilities, actions and targets which are both manageable and realistic
- integrating ESD more fully into the curriculum planning to add relevance and progression to pupils' learning
- continuing to use high profile enrichment opportunities such as 'Bike it' and the school travel plan to raise the profile of sustainability in the school and the wider community
- considering the eventual amalgamation of the school council and the 'Green Team' to encourage a more co-ordinated approach to ESD and reduce duplication of effort
- enhancing learning by utilising links with schools abroad to continue to develop the global dimension, thereby encouraging pupils' better understanding of diverse cultures and communities.

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  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools  
Specialist Adviser for Geography and ESD