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30 December 2008

Mr J Rylance
Headteacher
Ottery St Mary Primary School
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Dear Mr Rylance

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 06 October 2008 to look at work in promoting equality.

The visit provided valuable information that 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included discussions with key members of staff, pupils, parents, governors, key partners and the observation of parts of four lessons.

The quality of provision to promote equalities is good.

Features of good practice observed

- The school works well with the local authority and utilizes appropriate help and guidance available through external agencies to support any vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils who have spent time away from school travelling with their families are extremely well supported so that they make very good progress with their learning. This is because carefully tailored work is provided by the school that is related to the area being travelled to and the activity that the family is engaged with during the absence. Here parents are integral to the success of this work. They ensure that the set work is completed on a daily basis and to a good standard. Upon their return these pupils are quickly reintegrated into the life of the school and swiftly become accustomed to its routines. They have good friendship groups and enjoy school very much. Parents particularly appreciate the ability to e-mail work for marking should the need arise.

- Those pupils who have complex learning difficulties are very ably supported by caring, confident teaching and support staff. In class they are fully involved in all activities and they make good progress in their learning because the teaching style and lesson content are adapted to suit their abilities and needs.
- Those pupils who have been at the school for a couple of years who started the school with little understanding of the English language make very good progress. This is again because of the good teaching and support that they get in the school.
- Pupils who are new to the country and at the very early stages of learning English are made to feel at home by the caring supportive community of adults and children. Even though they have restricted verbal communication with their peers other pupils actively try to work with them in class. Likewise at lunchtimes and playtimes other pupils purposefully join them to help them fit into school life and feel welcomed.

Areas for development

- Accelerate the learning of pupils who are at the very early stages of learning English by increasing the amount of key concepts that they can learn from adults or older students in their first language.
- Ensure that there are support networks available for children of different heritages so that they can celebrate them more within the local community and have friends of the same age with similar backgrounds who have a shared understanding.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to promote equalities in the school.

As I explained previously, 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

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector