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Mrs E Dwyer  
Clifford Holroyde Specialist SEN College  
Thingwall Lane  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
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Dear Mrs Dwyer

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 October 2008, to look at work in promoting equality.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: observing lessons, scrutinising school documentation, discussions with parents, pupils, teachers, managers, governors and other professionals who provide additional support to the pupils in the school.

This is a designated Centre of Expertise to provide for students who have statements of special educational need because of their severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In 2005 the college was awarded specialist status for behavioural, emotional and social development and became a 'Trailblazer School'. Most students who attend the college have been excluded from other schools, have a history of poor attendance and consider themselves to have failed.

The quality of provision to promote equalities is outstanding.

Features of good practice observed

- The leadership sets a strong ethos of valuing individuals and raising aspirations. Students and parents say they feel the staff care and go out of their way to enable students to achieve. All the staff have an excellent understanding of the diverse and difficult emotional needs of each student and as a consequence, the management of student behaviour is exemplary. A simple set of five college rules, based on respect for self and

others are understood and liked by students, parents and staff. These form the basis of the stable, happy college community. When students achieve, they are rewarded by social time, which successfully reinforces the emphasis the college places on students learning to behave in a socially acceptable way. As a result of this excellent culture, the students achieve outstandingly well in their personal development.

- A very thorough assessment of the students' strengths and weaknesses on entry to the college is used effectively by the leadership to indicate student potential. Using this information, each student has an individual learning plan, which is shared with the student and parents or carers. Progress against the plan is checked regularly and the students are very clear about what they need to do next to achieve. Robust systems to monitor progress are in place, which are linked effectively to the rewards for students. All students, by the time they leave at 16 have gained a range of qualifications and take up work placement or college places. This is outstanding achievement, when measured against the students' very low academic starting points and their emotional and behavioural needs.
- Very effective partnership work enables the college to provide an innovative 'Leadership Course' for all students in Key Stage 4. During the visit, Year 10 and Year 11 were working to achieve instructor status in canoeing. All students are involved and take different modules according to their interests. They take pride in their achievements. These active curriculum activities are designed to enable students to learn to work together and relate well to each other, developing their life-skills.
- The college uses its 'Trailblazer' status effectively. It is a centre of learning for emotional well being. Staff and students benefit from the research projects which investigate emotional behaviours and neurological development led by staff at the school. Effective partnerships with the CAMHS team, the LA educational psychologist and the local hospital leads to the high quality care and support provided for the students. Several imaginative sensory learning spaces have been created in the school and in the grounds. These enable students to explore their emotional development, with the support of highly trained staff. Students appreciate this and say it helps them to manage their problems. Interagency work for students with extreme mental health issues is good and individuals are well supported.
- The college is highly successful in providing outreach. It developed and runs the 'Helena Project' for girls with emotional and social difficulties for whom no other special provision is made. It also works with local primary schools on a project to provide the 'Assessments in Neuro-Developmental Delay'. This enables local schools to be more effective in identifying the nature of difficulties for their vulnerable children. The college is pro-active in searching for support for its students during holiday periods and has been successful in gaining holiday placements for its most vulnerable. Parents and carers appreciate this. The parents are keen for the college to extend the leaving age to 18 and be open during the holidays for year round provision.

- Inclusion is outstanding. All students take an active part in all college activities and are fully integrated into the life and work of the college. Parents report 'a transformation' in the way their children behave, both at college and at home. They say they 'no longer feel excluded'. Students feel valued. Parents feel part of the school community and appreciate the 'little touches' such as the telephone calls they receive from teachers to say their child has done something well. Visitors are welcomed to the college and the students are friendly and polite. Conversations during the lunch time are friendly and students show an interest in others and are evidence of their confidence in social situations.
- The care guidance and support for all pupils has an outstanding impact on improving their personal development. The clear guidance given to students enables them to learn to control and manage their behaviour. When students do lose control and incidents occur, they are dealt with quickly and skilfully by staff, and students are helped to re-integrate into the activity. This enables the student to maintain self-respect and to quickly become an active member of the group. Time is not wasted. The consistency in which this approach to behaviour is applied means the students have a clear understanding of acceptable boundaries and leads to their outstanding achievement.

#### Areas for development

- Improve the standards achieved by more able pupils by ensuring that the work set is always at the right level.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop promoting equalities in Clifford Holroyde Specialist Centre of SEN.

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

Gill Jones  
Her Majesty's Inspector