

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

Textphone 0161 618 8524
T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0207 421 5642
Direct F 0207 421 6746
Mark.Hogan@ofsted.gov.uk



22nd January 2009

Mr. G. Shipley,
Headteacher,
St. Catherine's School,
Grove Road,
Ventnor,
Isle of Wight.
PO38 1TT

Dear Mr. Shipley,

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Moving through the system

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 November 2008 to look at work on developing the future economic well-being of pupils and students in your school. We also looked at how well arrangements are made to prepare students for leaving 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included:

- meetings with yourself and staff
- observation of part of one lesson
- discussions with four groups of pupils and students and at lunchtime
- a visit to the Worx vocational unit
- review of documentation

Overall, your work in developing the future economic well-being of pupils and students in your school is outstanding. The pupils and students demonstrate a strongly developing self-confidence that empowers them to take the initiative and also to work constructively with others. They learn very well how to deal with change and to be creative in their thinking. They are bold enough to take well-judged risks and most are rational in their decision-making. The students in the further education centre have a very good understanding of their career and progression options. Through their work experience, and other contact with outside agencies and employers, they develop a good understanding of the disciplines required in the workplace.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Features of effective practice:

- Pupils and students make very good progress towards the challenging and measurable targets on their individual education plans. They achieve well and gain in independence. The wide-ranging curriculum creates many opportunities for practising and improving personal and social skills resulting in outstanding personal development. Pupils and students are encouraged to recognise and be proud of their achievements. A broad range of social and vocational qualifications are used in the further education centre.
- The curriculum for economic well-being is comprehensive and well planned. The school curriculum is cross-referenced to economic well-being and the recent audit identifies activities and special projects which broaden the subject areas. The focus of the curriculum is on preparing pupils and students for the next phase in their education and lives. This is very successful and includes speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, a very effective independence package which includes four levels of criteria for independent travel, social interaction schemes, a life-skills toolkit and functional communication modules. Each pupil and student is encouraged to open a bank account and put their pocket money in it. The majority successfully budget for entrance fees for activities, haircuts, clothes and other items.
- The structure of the timetable and the geographical positioning of the further education centre create a division that successfully signifies a progression into a more adult environment. Planning for this transition starts in year 11 and additional support is available for students who require it. The curriculum includes a broad range of vocational, personal and social development qualifications. Students attend the local school for specific subjects, if appropriate. The Worx vocational training unit is situated a short walk from the school on an industrial estate. It offers a variety of work-based experiences in a challenging, enjoyable and realistic environment. Students really enjoy the activities there. In the second year in the further education centre, students take part in half-day a week visits to the local further education college. They take courses as a discrete group and have half-term blocks in a variety of vocational areas. This not only introduces the students to the college but also offers them a chance to try out a variety of vocational areas. A group of students is actively involved with the Young Chamber organisation and meets with other schools on the Isle of Wight. They successfully take part in Young Chamber challenges such as carrying out a customer satisfaction survey on the Isle of Wight ferry.
- Careers education is well structured and follows the local Connexions' STEPS programme. Work experience is an important part of the curriculum with good preparation, practice and travel planning. Work experience is local to the school in the first year in the further education centre and is local to home in the second year. Considerable care is taken in setting up the home-based work experience. Work with the school's Connexions personal adviser is excellent and she also liaises with the Connexions services local to home.
- Leadership and management are very strong with a focus and commitment by all staff to ensure each pupil and student achieves at the highest level possible. The curriculum, school activities, support and activities by the care team all focus on this outcome.

Feedback from parents confirms this. The strategy to separate the further education centre from the main school is extremely effective. Students recognise a change in the way they are treated and how they behave. They accept their new responsibilities with excitement and commitment. The school successfully introduces a supported progression process that acts as a learning tool for when the students leave school. The school is working with parents to explore alternative opportunities at age 19.

- Partnerships with schools and external agencies are excellent and offer opportunities for students to use other facilities and extend their experiences. Pupils from schools use the vocational facilities at the Worx.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- Both the school council and the further education council offer opportunities for pupils and students to practise their personal and social skills and become involved in the decision-making in the school. At present, the councils do not have a budget or the opportunity to make budgetary decisions.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop economic well-being in the school.

As I explained, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jan LLoyd

Jan LLoyd
Her Majesty's Inspector