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Mrs J Steel
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Steel

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 24 February 2009 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: visits to four sites, lesson observations, meetings with pupils, parents, staff including medical staff, telephone conversation with the chair of governors and reviewing relevant documentation.

The quality of provision to promote equalities for pupils is outstanding.

Features of good practice observed

- Across all sites the commitment of staff to identifying, assessing and meeting individual needs is outstanding. Working together with parents/carers and medical staff great consideration is given to individual cultural, emotional, social and medical needs within the context of an educational setting. As a result of this holistic approach, pupils make good progress across many aspects of learning including self confidence, communication and social skills, and academic performance.
- Good communication with a pupil's home school ensures that those on short term placements have minimal disruption to their education. Pupils receiving long term treatment make good progress and for some they exceed expectations of their family and home school as a result of well

targeted and specialist teaching. Many gain good levels of qualifications or results in national tests.

- Highly effective multidisciplinary cooperation provides very good support for the child and their family. There is a shared accountability for the outcomes of both those with mental health and medical needs, and a mutual respect for the different contribution each professional makes to an agreed programme. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined but in practice provision appears seamless especially at the Child and Family Unit. This holistic approach ensures that needs are met through good communication and consistent approaches.
- The wide range of experience and backgrounds of education staff provides excellent support for pupils of different ethnic heritage and medical needs. They are deployed flexibly across hospital sites as necessary to encourage and re-engage pupils with learning activities. Very creative and knowledgeable teachers ensure the needs of pupils with profound and multiple difficulties are assessed well and they enjoy a wide range of stimulating learning experiences.
- Those pupils who come to England for treatment who speak no English are well supported with home language speakers on the staff, translators or education packages promoting increased language skills. Teachers understand the medical reasons affecting a pupil's engagement with or interest in learning. Rather than making this an excuse they seek ways of enthusing pupils. An art therapist extends the range of provision.
- Outstanding leadership and management ensures consistency of practice across a complex organisation whilst maintaining a well trained and highly motivated staff team and fun learning environments. The flexible deployment of specialist teaching staff provides good opportunities for pupils, especially those following GCSE and A Level courses to continue with course work and achieve good success in external accreditation.
- Good training provides teachers with the confidence to manage the medical dimension of a child's life whilst providing stimulating, enjoyable learning experiences. Pupils are confident that teachers understand their medical needs and can 'manage the machines' should a medical problem arise. Being limited to a hospital bed is no barrier to attending school.
- The curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of their own needs and those of others. Its flexibility in design and creativity in delivery provides the flexibility to match learning to individual needs regardless of age or length of stay. Pupils with mental health issues participate in a range of activities with both medical and educational staff that lead to a greater awareness of other people's needs, an ability to articulate their own problems and identify strategies for coping with their emotions.

- The introduction of a school's intranet and video conferencing facilities provides an excellent tool for ensuring all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and can participate in group learning. Those isolated or segregated for specific medical protocols receive the same learning opportunities as their peers and are able to participate in group activity even though they are unable to join in classroom activities.
- Identification and assessment processes effectively demonstrate areas for development and record the progress made by each pupil. The use of video clips, compiled for each pupil into a Leavers DVD, illustrates the broad and interesting curriculum experience but also powerfully demonstrates the enjoyment had and achievements made.
- Parents report the very good relationships between staff and pupils. Those with children with medical needs are very appreciative of the education provided, not only for the achievements made but for the psychological boost and motivation it provides for their children whilst going through medical treatment. The school provides much valued family support.
- The school has charitable status and through fund raising is able to provide fifty week provision. This ensures pupils in hospital over summer holidays and half term breaks have access to a range of leisure and recreational activities, including a residential holiday for those attending the Child and Family Unit.
- Planning for transition for re-integration is highly effective. The school provides very good and on going support for pupils moving back to school or on to adult wards. The school regularly follows up on the success of re-integration and is concerned that some secondary school placements are less successful in meeting pupils' emotional needs.

Areas for development

- Where the school identifies limitations in a receiving school's procedures for re-integration, continue to work collaboratively to clarify and formalise pupils' requirements, for example, support and nurture during transition.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to promote equalities across the school's provision.

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.

Ofsted gathers information on the immediate and longer-term impact of survey inspections, both on the institutions themselves, and with a view to improving its own processes. To this end, we should be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the next ten days. We have also just sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Please return your completed questionnaire to either the email or postal address on the form, not to us. We may also contact some schools by telephone after several months in order for us to gain a picture of longer-term impact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Burdis
Her Majesty's Inspector