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Mrs Buckingham
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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 final visit on 04 November 2008 to look at work in ESD.

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 was a follow up monitoring visit which is intended to assess the progress the school has made in developing ESD throughout the school since the previous visit.

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

Since the last visit, the school has established a structure which should enable it to embed sustainability more fully into the everyday fabric of school life. Progress has been made and although overall effectiveness remains satisfactory there are some aspects which are now good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in ESD are both satisfactory.

- Pupils have improved awareness of the need to lead sustainable lives partly because sustainability has a more visible profile around the school but also from what is happening in the world around them.

- There is greater awareness of different places and cultures around the world. This is being stimulated by improved or developing contacts with schools in the Gambia, Uganda and Australia.
- Pupils understand that it is important to recycle, reduce and re-use but as yet this is not yet consistently established across the school to enable them to do so. The 'Green Team' has been empowered to ensure that this becomes a reality.
- Pupils understand the need to lead healthy lives but do not always choose to do so. Too many continue to include chocolate, crisps and processed snacks in their lunchboxes. However, the increasing numbers who choose to walk or bike to school does reflect changing attitudes and a raised awareness of the impact that vehicles have on their environment.
- A real 'care' agenda has developed as part of the changing ethos of the school. Pupils are polite and respectful to strangers as well as to each other. The effective school council has been much involved in promoting this.
- Behaviour is exemplary and has been identified as being 'much improved' by pupils to the extent that 'Befrienders' are no longer required. Pupils care for each other and their environment which is litter free.

Quality of teaching and learning of ESD

At this early stage in the school year, insufficient evidence was available in terms of pupils' work to make a firm judgement on the quality of learning. However, two good lessons were observed where good interaction between teachers and pupils stimulated thinking. Relationships were positive and pupils were actively encouraged to work collaboratively. Discussions enabled pupils to develop argument and express opinion. There was good evidence to show an increased emphasis on the learning rather than the teaching.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the ESD curriculum is currently satisfactory but has the potential to be good.

- The school has restructured its curriculum to focus on key skills through a topic based focus. This new structure has only been in place since September and it is too early to judge the overall quality.
- There is an expectation that opportunities to teach about sustainability will be identified in the planning and will be delivered in the classroom. Currently, however, there remain some inconsistencies in implementation among a minority of staff.
- The unit on 'People Matter', piloted earlier in the year, provides an exemplar of good practice which shows how learning about sustainability can be woven effectively into a teaching programme. In learning about slavery, pupils learnt about contrasting cultures and

places, they were introduced to the concept of interdependence and explored equity and justice. Elsewhere, skills from mathematics lessons were applied in art to design quilts with hidden codes in the style of those used to guide escaped slaves to freedom in the United States.

- The school is actively promoting the global dimension through established links with a school in the Gambia and developing links with schools in Australia and Uganda. Teaching is also enhanced by visitors to the school and through specific themed projects such as 'Gambia week' or the 'Cultural Olympics'. This is helping to promote a greater understanding of diverse cultures and community cohesion.
- The potential for developing outdoor learning is outstanding. The landscaping of the school field, the provision of an outdoor classroom and polytunnel as well as raised beds and growing areas for each class provide a wonderful opportunity to develop real life learning as part of an enhanced curriculum over the coming year.
- The school is utilising its contacts and experts with the local community well to make more effective use of this outdoor classroom. In making traditional Devon 'cob' buildings and raising their own crops the pupils will be able to experience sustainable living at first hand.
- The provision of dedicated curriculum time for school councillors to meet, feedback and liaise with their classmates has improved the effectiveness and raised the profile of the school council.

Leadership and management of ESD

Leadership and management of ESD are good.

- There is an increasingly shared commitment in making the school a 'sustainable school'. Leadership and management at all levels are now more actively engaged in developing sustainability as a core value central to the school ethos and the teaching curriculum.
- The provision of dedicated time to enable co-ordination of sustainability around the school has raised its profile and importance.
- Sustainability is clearly identified in the school development plan as an area that is a priority for development. The actions outlined are comprehensive and show a clear vision for taking the school forward.
- The School Council has improved and is becoming a real change agent around the school. It is well organised, meets regularly and there is real ownership aimed at improving the quality of life around the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- using the 'Green Team' more effectively to promote sustainable living around the school especially making better use of resources and recycling more efficiently
- embedding the global dimension more fully into the curriculum by giving it a greater emphasis within curriculum planning and teaching

- supporting government recommendations, set out in the 'Outdoor Learning Manifesto', by providing dedicated curriculum time to enable each pupil to experience learning outside the immediate classroom environment
- continuing to develop pupil voice around the school to further increase pupil impact on improving the school environment.

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