

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs P Cornish
Headteacher
Saddleworth School
High Street
Uppermill
Oldham
O13 6BU

Dear Mrs Cornish

Ofsted survey inspection programme 2009-10: healthy eating in schools

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, students and parents, during my visit with my colleagues from the School Food Trust on 3 November 2009 to look at your work on healthier eating and school food provision.

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 within the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with parents and students; scrutiny of school documentation, including your policies and evidence of students' work; and observation of three lessons, as well as the breakfast club, mid-morning break and the school at lunchtime.

The quality of provision to promote healthy eating

The quality of provision to promote healthy eating is good.

Compliance with the Department for Children, Schools and families' (DCSF's) food-based and nutrient-based standards for school food

Compliance with the DCSF food-based and nutrient-based standards for school food is good.

- The lunchtime provision was compliant with most of the food-based standards. There was only one minor point to resolve; the removal of butter from the extra bread served at lunchtime. The lunch provision meets 13 of the 14 nutrient-based standards.

- The food and drink provided at the breakfast club and in vending machines was compliant with all the food-based standards for school food other than lunches.

The quality of the dining experience

The quality of the dining experience is good.

- The dining hall is small because of the age of the building. The school has made a good effort to maximise its use so that students can sit with their friends and socialise while eating.
- The quality of school meals is good. The school offers three different outlets for food: hot food, fast food and the salad bar which is very popular with students. Portion sizes for carbohydrates are sometimes too large and this leads to too much waste.
- Behaviour in the dining hall is good and many staff choose to eat there and to supervise the students during break and lunchtimes.

Helping students and parents to make healthier choices

Strategies for helping students and parents to make healthier choices are satisfactory.

- Students have an opportunity to influence the choices of school meals through the school council. The school catering manager seeks the opinions of the council and she acts upon their views.
- The science club is in the process of setting up an allotment where they will grow their own food. Planning for this is well underway and the catering manager has already negotiated with the students to buy and use the food grown.
- Parents have little influence or input into the types of food served. New parents are invited to taster sessions before joining the school which are received well; but these are not repeated. The school does not yet do enough to engage parents in the choices of school meals or in the promotion of healthy lunchboxes.

Development of students' knowledge and personal skills

Development of students' knowledge and personal skills is outstanding.

- Students talked with confidence about making healthy food choices. They understood the importance of exercising and eating sensibly.
- Take-up in extra-curricular physical education is good with a diverse range of activities on offer. The school responds well to the needs and interests of students and the allotment project, cheerleading, dance and fit clubs are evidence of this.

- In food technology lessons, clear messages are given about what constitutes healthy eating through the 'eat well' plate and 'licence to cook' opportunities.
- Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very well to take full part in lessons and develop their cooking skills and knowledge about healthy eating.

Teaching about healthier eating

Teaching about healthier eating is good.

- Teaching of healthy eating across the school is good because teachers have good subject knowledge and give clear messages which are uniform across different subjects.
- Food work encourages students to cook and develop their understanding of how to prepare and cook fresh foods. Well thought-out design briefs encourage a good balance of research, practical cookery and evaluation.
- Year 9 students were observed cooking a healthy snack involving pastry which had to be multi-cultural, nutritious and savoury. All students worked with enthusiasm and were very knowledgeable about their products and able to talk at length about their choices. The finished snacks were of a high standard.

Planning the curriculum

Planning the curriculum is good.

- Healthy eating and nutrition are taught in science, design and technology, physical education, and personal and social development. The school has devised the curriculum well so that modules taught in one subject one year are picked up in another subject the next year, ensuring progression in the understanding of the complexities of healthy eating.
- The school has made good links between curriculum areas to promote healthy eating. The design work seen in the dining hall very effectively promotes healthy eating in an attractive and interesting way. Modern foreign language lessons also promote healthy eating and the food technology curriculum skilfully builds on students' different language options in their design briefs.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The school's management of teaching, learning and the curriculum is good. Healthy eating is a high priority within the school. The teaching staff are motivated, committed and are part of a team delivering high-quality outcomes for students.

- The management of the food service is good due to the catering manager's enthusiasm and knowledge.
- Students and parents are not as involved as they could be and the school is aware of the need to seek their views more systematically.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the take-up of school lunches for different groups of students are good, but the biometric system installed is currently underused in measuring the impact of the school's work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include the need to:

- consider reducing the portion sizes of the potato, rice and pasta, biscuits and slices of cake. This will resolve the area of non-compliance (high energy) and help to reduce food waste
- improve the consultation with students, parents and the wider community in developing the school's food policies
- use the biometric system more effectively to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's work on increasing school lunch take-up.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop healthier eating and provision for food in the school.

As I explained during the feedback, 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

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector