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Miss K Pluckrose
Headteacher
St Mary's RC Primary School
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Dear Miss Pluckrose

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, pupils and parents, during my visit with my colleague from the School Food Trust on 11 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, pupils and staff; scrutiny of school documentation, including your school evaluation and school food policy; analysis of pupils' work, and observation of five part lessons, 'tuck time', school lunch and a visit to the after-school provider.

I undertook to provide a brief written version of the main points made in our feedback at the end of the visit, to support development in healthier eating and school meals.

The quality of provision to promote healthy eating

The quality of provision to promote healthy eating is good with numerous outstanding features.

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

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

- The lunchtime provision was fully compliant with the food-based and 14 nutrient-based standards for lunches.
- The food and drink provided at the tuck shop were fully compliant with the food-based standards for all school food other than lunches, but the provision at the after-school care provider was not fully compliant.

The quality of the dining experience

The quality of the dining experience is good.

- The multi-purpose hall is a clean, calm dining room over the lunch period. The pupils queue in an orderly manner and have sufficient time to enjoy their meals and talk to their friends. Pupils are sensitively encouraged to make their own choices about what to eat, but currently wait to have a drink until after the meal.

Helping pupils and parents to make healthier choices

Strategies for helping pupils and parents to make healthier choices are outstanding.

- Parents questioned were unanimous about the excellent care and information from the school concerning their children's eating habits. They receive the menus and the nutrient analysis. Almost all (95%) pupils eat a healthy school lunch and only those who have very specific dietary needs eat a packed lunch. The school would be happy to work with their caterers to meet pupils' medical dietary requirements where possible.

Development of pupils' knowledge and personal skills

Development of pupils' knowledge and personal skills is outstanding.

- Pupils are made aware from a young age about what is healthy. They benefit from growing vegetables in the Nursery class. In older classes, they learn what makes a balanced meal and how to select the healthier options when eating food such as pizza. The emotional aspects of eating are considered by older pupils who thoroughly enjoyed the debate provoked by the related junior academic assembly.

Teaching about healthier eating

Teaching about healthier eating is outstanding.

- Younger pupils learn practically through activities such as playing shops and making fruit salad. Older pupils also enjoy making appropriate food in some technology lessons. They receive good personal and health education that is linked to their religious education. This, added to the excellent range of clubs promoting fitness, ensures that the school meets its aim of 'a healthy body, mind and spirit'.

- The school council is encouraged to make suggestions and these are followed whenever possible.

Planning the curriculum

Planning of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The school takes the teaching of healthy lifestyles very seriously and has done so for many years. It has had healthy school status since the beginning of the programme and is working now on the advanced scheme. Teachers continually reinforce healthy-eating messages. Consistent messages are taught in science, personal and social development and physical education, as well as in design and technology. Links across subjects help pupils grow in understanding and independence when making healthy choices. There are also special theme weeks that are very effective in getting health messages across to everyone in a way that is fun.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- You, your senior team and governors all see eating healthily as a cornerstone for the education the school provides. The kitchen team spends time helping younger pupils to make healthy choices. The positive approach to health and well-being is promoted effectively by all involved in the school, including those who support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those that teach netball and yoga before school and run activities after school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- coordinating and monitoring information from all food providers to ensure that the food and drink provided after-school are fully compliant with the food-based standards.

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

Mo Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector