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Mr C Maloney
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Maloney

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 23 February 2009 to look at work in promoting equality. Please convey my thanks to the pupils, parents and governors I met during my visit.

The visit provided valuable information that 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 discussions with key members of staff, pupils, parents, carers, governors and the observation of parts of four lessons.

The quality of provision to promote equalities is outstanding.

Features of good practice observed

- Leadership and management of the provision for vulnerable pupils are excellent. Provision is well organised and roles and responsibilities are well defined to ensure pupils are identified who need support, they get it and then their progress is monitored. Staff are suitably held to account for the progress of vulnerable pupils which helps ensure they remain prominent in staff's planning and delivery. Evaluation of provision and outcomes for these pupils is also extremely good. Senior leaders have developed a school with a very clear ethos of equality, where provision is well matched to individual needs. The governing body features significantly in the development of provision for the large proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Governors have a good knowledge of the school and hold it to account well. They are also proactive in making sure the school is a hub in the local community. Governor's expertise and experience are used very effectively

in developing the school's extended services. For example, the school's nursery provision and extensive sports and community provision has helped parents and the local and wider community engage with the school.

- Parents and carers of vulnerable pupils are extremely positive about the school and how it has helped their children but also how it has helped them to aid their children's education. They find the school very welcoming. The work of the learning mentor is applauded by parents and carers who view her as a constant source of guidance and support. A few spoke about how the parenting classes they attended had helped them manage their children more effectively and also how they were now able to support the school better. The school has raised their expectations. Some were able to say how their children had been turned back on to education after having had negative experiences of education prior to coming to the school. Parents from the traveller community demonstrated this when they explained how they moved away from the school but returned sooner than they intended because their children were missing the school so much.
- The school's response to underachievement is excellent. A variety of interventions are used to tackle underachievement. Other agencies and personnel are drawn in quickly if the school finds its own initial responses haven't been successful. The school's records show that overall vulnerable pupils make at least good progress.
- The quality of teaching and learning observed was not less than good and in two of the part lessons observed it was outstanding. Teachers have a very good knowledge of individual pupils because of effective initial screenings, ongoing assessments and because they ensure they evaluate the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning. Good collaboration between pupils was a strong feature in all the lessons observed. This fostered good speaking and listening skills and joint decision making and helped to engage all pupils in the lesson. Pupils found the lessons meaningful which also stimulated their involvement. Support staff and teachers supported pupils in need very well through a good mix of close support when necessary and the promotion of as much independence as possible.
- The views of the pupils interviewed demonstrated that they value the school. A few were able to cite how it had helped them overcome particular difficulties. One pupil, for example, explained how he is much calmer and more in control of his feelings, having had significant behaviour and attendance problems in his previous school. His attendance is no longer a concern.
- Members of staff work very well in 'learning teams' to support and challenge each other. Continuing professional development, through a mix of general training for all staff and targeted training for some is ensuring that staff are well informed and consistent in their approaches. The curriculum is very well tailored to pupils' needs, not least through its annual review by subject teachers. Information and communication technology is playing an increasingly important part in matching literacy and numeracy work to pupils' needs, especially for those with learning difficulties. It is accelerating the learning of most of the pupils who have this kind of support.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to promote equalities in the school.

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

Eric Craven
Her Majesty's Inspector