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Mrs Clennell
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Clennell

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Attendance for Learning in Secondary Schools

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 September 2006 to look at your work in promoting attendance.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff, pupils and a representative from of the local authority, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and observation of two parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of your work in promoting attendance was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- There has been year on year improvements in the percentage of pupils achieving 5 x A* - C GCSEs rising from 44% in 2000/01 to 73% in 2004/05. The school reports a modest dip to 71% in 2005/06.
- Pupils' attendance has correspondingly risen from 93.1% in 2001/02 to 94.8% in 2004/05, more than two points above the national average for secondary schools. However, the school return for 2005/06 shows attendance at 94.1%.
- Pupils are well behaved, polite and courteous.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- In two lessons seen, the pupils with attendance problems were fully engaged and had good relationships with their teachers and peers.
- The pupils interviewed provided examples of excellent support given to them by learning mentors and the Education Welfare Officer.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The school's personalisation of the curriculum through the alternative learning programme for some pupils is impressive. Some spoke enthusiastically of opportunities to attend college and of timetables being adjusted when helping them re-engage following periods of absence.
- Some of the pupils explained how the alternative curriculum packages had motivated them to improve their attendance and to study for their GCSEs.

Leadership and management of Attendance

Leadership and management of attendance are outstanding.

- The team work of key attendance personnel is impressive.
- There is excellent communication at all levels aided by clear and consistently applied systems. This enables staff to respond swiftly to issues of attendance.
- Staff have a very thorough knowledge of individual pupils.
- Very clear messages to pupils and parents ensure that attendance is considered a priority at this school.
- Very good pro-active work on attendance at primary to secondary transfer enables the school to get off to a well informed start with new pupils.
- The school uses a range of well-considered and effective strategies to promote good attendance.
- Good use is made of the link between a pupil's attendance and attainment at an individual pupil level.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- The school's focus on individuals results in no child being left out. Vulnerable pupils are given opportunities to be included in all activities.
- Each pupil interviewed was able to identify a member of staff who they feel genuinely cares about them and is there to support them when in need.
- The Directory of Pupils' Needs is a very helpful document for staff ensuring that the particular needs of vulnerable pupils are well known.
- Pupils who have poor attendance receive excellent support, coupled with suitable challenge to improve.

Areas for improvement

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

- make more use of whole school data which links pupils' attendance with their attainment.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop your attendance work 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

Eric Craven
Her Majesty's Inspector

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