

17 October 2006

Miss KJ Dagwell
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Dear Miss Dagwell

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 29 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 representatives from 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 good.

Achievement and standards

- The school made significant progress in the 2005/6 academic year in
reducing its overall rate of absence. This now compares favourably with
the local authority average.
- For the few pupils tracked on the inspection, levels of engagement and
achievement were at least satisfactory and in many cases good.

Quality of teaching and learning

- The school has made the development of personalised learning and
associated teaching strategies a major focus in recent years.

- The school uses an impressive range of measures to emphasise to pupils, parents and staff the links between attendance and pupil achievement.
- Staff relate consistently well with pupils, who feel they are treated with both care and respect.
- Very effective learning and personal support is provided to help poor attenders back into full-time attendance at school with full participation in classroom activities.
- In the two lessons seen, the pupils with attendance problems were fully and effectively engaged with the work of the class. The quality of teaching and learning was outstanding.

Quality of curriculum

- The quality of the curriculum in supporting attendance is good.
- The school has substantially expanded the range of activities offered at Key Stage 4, including part-time attendance at college and extended work experience placements. This has enabled more customised packages to be put together to meet pupils' individual needs.

Leadership and management of attendance

- Leadership and management in relation to attendance are good.
- Attendance is an integral part of the school's overall development planning and is given high priority within this.
- Reasons for pupil absence are challenged robustly and the recent increase in support staff resources for this task has been a positive step.
- Individual pupils' attendance is monitored regularly and both the planning and review of action to secure improvement are detailed and rigorous.
- The school records very detailed information on pupil attendance, although continuing problems with its electronic registration system have hampered both the collection and analysis of data.
- Good use is made of rewards and sanctions for pupils.
- Whilst appropriate steps are taken to praise parents for their contribution to improving their children's attendance, comparable use is not made of sanctions. However, this is the responsibility of the local authority rather than the school.
- Good steps are taken to invite pupils' views on how the school operates.
- There is effective collaboration with other schools, especially in terms of easing the transition from primary school for pupils identified as potentially vulnerable.
- Liaison with most other agencies is good.

Inclusion

- The provision for inclusion in relation to attendance is good.
- All the pupils interviewed said that there was at least one member of staff who took a particular interest in their well-being and progress.
- All said similarly that there was at least one person who they could approach with confidence about any problems.
- Effective steps are taken to address bullying.

- There are a number of sources of personal support for pupils with problems, including peer mentoring.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- using the detailed attendance information available to extend the range of analysis undertaken, for example to compare pupils' attendance at lessons across the different academic subjects and to establish more clearly for pupils and parents the impact of attendance on achievement
- developing more precise outcome measures for evaluating the success of strategies to improve attendance and setting clearer targets for improvement in school development and associated action plans.

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

J.N. Cordwell
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc LA