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Mr Nick Ware
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ware

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 12 October 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 from the school, the local authority and three groups of pupils, and scrutiny of relevant documentation.

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

Achievement and standards

- Achievement is good as the school has made very good progress in improving attendance in a particularly challenging context. The attendance target for 2006/7 has already been exceeded.
- The school links attendance data to pupil attainment and achievement very well. Pupils and their parents are very clear about the negative impact of missing school.

Quality of teaching and learning

- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory for the groups of pupils interviewed. The school is aware that in some lessons, recently introduced sanctions for unwanted behaviour are applied too readily.

- Pupils identify some lessons where unwanted behaviour and a narrow range of teaching strategies limit learning. The school has prioritised improving the quality of teaching and learning and action is well underway.

Quality of curriculum

- The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory for the groups of pupils interviewed. Recently introduced personalised curriculum pathways and increased choice at Key Stage 4, is promoting engagement in learning.
- Pupils in Year 11 find that Year 10 does not equip them sufficiently well for the demands of GCSE.

Leadership and management

- Leadership and management of attendance for learning are good. The school is determined that all pupils should attend regularly and achieve well. It has a very clear view of what needs to be done and has introduced secure systems, procedures and processes to bring this about.
- The capacity for innovation is impressive, most notably in the reconfiguration of structures and the allocation of resources to prevention and early intervention.
- Effective partnerships with a range of key agencies and services work very well to raise levels of attendance.

Inclusion

- Provision for inclusion is good overall. At a strategic level, the school values even the most challenging pupils, understands why individuals are, or are at risk of becoming poor attenders and refuses to accept exclusion from learning.

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

- address the quality of teaching and learning in lessons where unwanted behaviour limits learning
- review the use of sanctions for unwanted behaviour against the school's policy for implementation.

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

Rosemary Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector

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