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Ms Patricia Cardis
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Cardis

Ofsted Survey Inspection Programme – The degree and effectiveness of parent and carer involvement in children and young people's education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, parents and pupils, during my visit with HMI Heather Weston on 01 November 2006 to look at the degree and effectiveness of parent and carer involvement in children's education.

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, parents and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of two activities led by parents. The judgements are specifically in relation to the degree and effectiveness of parent and carer involvement under the following headings.

The overall effectiveness of the degree and effectiveness of parent and carer involvement in children's education was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards including personal development

The impact of parental and carer involvement on achievement, standards and personal development is outstanding.

- The close liaison between home and school and the commitment of parents and carers to their child's education mean that all pupils in all groups make very good progress.

- The overwhelming majority of parents support their children at home with their work. The children know that this support really helps them to improve and make progress in achieving their targets.
- Attendance is monitored closely and the school is working effectively to improve attendance. Success is evident from Years 2 to 6, but attendance remains below national average in the Foundation Stage and Year 1. This rightly remains a school focus for further improvement.

Quality of teaching and learning including assessment, support and guidance

The impact of parent and carer involvement in these areas is outstanding.

- Excellent relationships impact positively on pupils' engagement with, and attitudes to, their learning.
- The school is proactive in ensuring that the vast majority of parents attend meetings relating to the progress of their children. Parents feel well informed of their children's targets and support them in achieving these both through homework and through their commitment to their child's success.
- All pupils are very well supported in school by effective use of pupil partners and by a range of adults, including a learning mentor and some parents.
- Parental help in class effectively supports pupils' learning with the development of basic skills, their personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children enjoy their parents joining in with a variety of activities and events, including helping with cooking or supporting reading and writing.
- Parental help with homework supports pupils' learning very well. Parents and pupils seek help from the school if they do not understand the homework, either by talking to staff or by pupils attending the homework club which is run by parents.
- The school gives a high level of support to parents by helping them to complete the on-line application forms for pupils' transfer to secondary education and by helping with any queries afterwards.

Quality of the curriculum

The impact of parental involvement on the quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The establishment of secure, trusting relationships with parents on entry to the school is a key priority. This enables children to settle well and for an ongoing dialogue between home and school to be established. As a result of

such positive parental engagement, the vast majority of pupils receive very good support from home in developing early reading and writing skills.

- Parents feel very well informed about their children's learning through the regular curriculum evenings and detailed half termly curriculum newsletters, which then enables them to fully support their children in all aspects of the curriculum.
- Parents contribute significantly to the enhancement of the curriculum, for example by their support with the Black History month. The school is therefore able to utilise the skills and knowledge of parents to enhance the learning experiences for pupils.
- Parents and pupils work together in Family Learning projects. A number of parents, once they have completed basic skills training, progress to college courses and successfully gain further accreditation. This important model demonstrates to pupils that learning is a lifelong process.
- Pupils respond well to parents joining the Friday celebration assemblies. Pupils also benefit from the opportunity to listen to stories read by parents and staff during the Friday afternoon themed story sessions.

Leadership and management of parent and carer involvement

Leadership and management in relation to parental involvement are outstanding.

- The welcome statement in the school prospectus which includes parental involvement is truly reflected in the work of the school. Likewise, one of the school's key aims to involve parents as fully as possible in their children's learning and progress is realised as a result of the clear commitment of all involved in the school.
- A broad range of formal and informal methods is used to engage parents in the life of the school and in their children's learning. Through careful monitoring, staff are aware of those groups or individuals who have difficulty in engaging with school and then encourage them to be involved.
- Members of staff act as advocates at meetings and support parents with outside agencies in order to best meet the needs of their pupils.
- The integral nature of parent and carer involvement is demonstrated by the fact that parents are written into all relevant policies, including the Communications Policy and Behaviour Policy.
- Practice in parental involvement is firmly embedded. The School Development Plan sets out a clear plan for the further refinement of practice to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The school canvasses the views of parents, and acts appropriately on the outcomes. For example parents, pupils and staff had identified that the playground was barren. A parent governor took responsibility for playground

development and with significant support from pupils, successfully bid for and won funding for a major playground development. This has subsequently successfully improved the school environment and the quality of outdoor play for all pupils.

Inclusion

The impact of parent and carer involvement on inclusion is outstanding.

- This truly inclusive school works hard to identify pupils' needs as soon as possible. These are met by working closely with parents and a range of professionals, including a learning mentor, arts therapist and play therapist.
- Priority is given to listening to parents and to supporting their needs. For example, the senior teaching assistant gives priority to meeting parents in order to support any family issues. Teaching staff are always happy to talk to parents about concerns connected to pupils' progress and how they might best help their child at home.
- The school closely monitors all pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable, including looked after children.
- The staffing at the school reflects the diversity of families of pupils in this school.
- Potential barriers caused by the large number of different languages and dialects spoken are effectively overcome. In most cases, help is accessed from parents and from staff or, if necessary, translators are employed.
- Key school documents are translated into the four main languages spoken by families.
- The school ensures that the range of events for parents appeals to the different groups of parents, so that there is "something for everyone" and that all families are embraced.

There were no significant areas for development, but two areas for continued improvement, which we discussed, were:

- ensuring that the school retains its existing commitment to parental partnership and seeks to maintain current outstanding practices
- continuing to work with parents of Foundation Stage and Year 1 pupils to improve attendance.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop parental involvement even further 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector