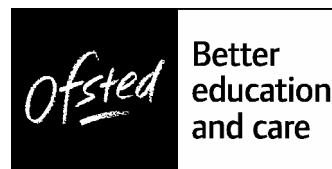


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16 November 2006

Mr Keith Defter
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Dear Mr Defter

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 on 14 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, and scrutiny of relevant documentation. 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 good.

Achievement and standards including personal development

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

- All groups of pupils in the school make at least satisfactory progress. The school works closely with vulnerable pupils and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities to ensure that they make the best progress that they can. The unit for pupils with physical impairment and the unit for those with specific learning difficulties are particularly valued by parents.
- The school works effectively with parents to promote the personal development and well-being of the pupils.
- The parents speak highly of the school's open-door policy. Parental questionnaires show that they have confidence in the school and its communication with them.
- Good induction arrangements ensure that pupils settle well into school and that parents understand the school's expectations. There are particularly effective arrangements for the induction of those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Parents are well informed about courses and options, enabling them to help their children make the right choices and meet the course requirements. This contributes well to their preparation for future economic well-being.
- The school has effective arrangements for monitoring behaviour, with sound systems for issuing rewards and sanctions. Parents value the school's swift response to their concerns and the way that the school contacts them if teachers have any concerns about their children.
- The school works well with parents to maintain good rates of attendance.

Quality of teaching and learning including assessment, support and guidance

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

- The school provides parents with a good range of information about their children's progress during the course of the year. It issues interim reports once per annum in Key Stage 3 and twice per annum in Key Stage 4. Every pupil also receives a full annual written report. There is an annual parents' evening at which subjects are represented and an annual review day where parents meet the tutor to discuss overall progress. Over 85% of parents attend these meetings.
- However, the annual written reports do not always give sufficient information about the pupils' skills in the subjects, and do not always state what pupils should do to improve their standards. The school has devised a new format for reports which should improve this situation.
- Parents are informed of numerical targets through the interim reports at Key Stage 4 but not at Key Stage 3.

- Parents particularly value the helpful information about courses, coursework and examinations, the good arrangements for explaining options and the subsequent meeting to discuss the requirements of subjects. However, the school does not give such detailed advice on how parents can help pupils to develop their study skills as independent learners, particularly at Key Stage 3.

Quality of the curriculum

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

- Parents feel well informed about the curriculum through the occasional curriculum evenings and the written description of courses issued annually in every year group.
- Good links with local organisations such as Swindon Town Football Club and an extensive range of trips enhance the curriculum, such as to the national games for the disabled. Parents are kept well informed of preparations for these events, frequently participate in them and enjoy the regular post-event occasions at which the pupils share what they have gained from their experiences.
- Specialist arts college status enables parents and the community to be involved in a good range of events which enhance the curriculum well.
- The curriculum responds to the diversity of the local community and the school takes effective steps to involve the parents of pupils from all backgrounds in their children's education.

Leadership and management of parent and carer involvement

Leadership and management in relation to parental involvement are good.

- The headteacher and senior team have a clear commitment to involving parents and carers in the education of the pupils which is shared by heads of house and heads of subject departments.
- Effective pastoral systems and faculty structures are responsive to parents' concerns and swift to involve parents when there are problems.
- Parents are well represented on the governing body and there is an active and effective parent and teacher association.
- There is a good range of meetings for parents and regular consultations.
- Evaluation and planning for the involvement of parents is implicit in the school's main priorities.
- Leadership and management of the units for the physically impaired and for those with specific learning difficulties are effective.

Inclusion

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

- This 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 to ensure the best outcomes for each child. The specialist units in the school for the physically impaired and for those with learning difficulties have a positive impact on the whole school.
- The school takes appropriate and effective action to involve reluctant and hard to reach parents in their children's education.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing more information for parents about how to help their children become independent learners
- involving parents more in the target setting process.

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

Andrew Harrett
Her Majesty's Inspector