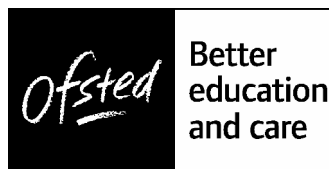


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16 February 2007

Ms Linda Austin  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Austin

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 5 February 2007 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 and achievement in the school is improving. Only one tenth of pupils do not

belong to a minority ethnic group and the largest group of pupils are of Bangladeshi heritage. The school works closely with the high proportion of bilingual pupils, those at early stages of English and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities, to ensure that they make the best progress that they can. Pupils with specific learning difficulties and disabilities and especially those with statements, form a significant proportion of the school population. The support they receive is particularly valued by parents, a high proportion of whom do not speak English as their first language.

- The school's work with parents to promote the personal development and well-being of the pupils is excellent.
- The parents speak highly of the school's open-door policy. The school works very extensively with parents, helping them understand the English education system and how best they can help their children in their studies. As a significant proportion of parents are Sylheti speakers and not literate in Bengali or English, the school has worked successfully to reach them through interpreters, the Home Liaison Officer, the effective deployment of learning mentors, and through working closely with a successful project based in the East London Mosque, aimed at raising pupils' attendance and achievement.
- Good induction arrangements ensure that pupils transferring from primary to secondary school, and those who arrive mid-year, settle well into school. Parents understand the school's expectations through a parent school contract. There are particularly effective arrangements for the induction of those who are at early stages of learning English.
- The school has very effective arrangements for monitoring behaviour, with a sound system of rewards and sanctions that has helped to reduce external exclusions significantly. 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.

Quality of teaching and learning including assessment, support and guidance

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

- A number of qualified teaching assistants and learning mentors are parents, ex parents or siblings. They have undergone training through the school's professional development programme to work more effectively in the classroom with individuals or small groups of students. The school has recognised that it needs to monitor the deployment of parents/ teaching assistants in the classroom, to ensure that they are used more effectively to improve pupils' learning. Where appropriate, parents are welcomed into the classroom to see how their children are progressing.
- Parents are well informed about courses and options in Year 9, enabling them to help their children make the right choices. The school provides parents

with a good range of information about their children's progress during the year and parental help sheets are available in reception that provide guidance on how parents can best help their children at school. The annual Information Advice and Progress parents' meetings, at which subjects are represented, and meetings where parents meet the tutor to discuss overall progress are very successful. Over 90% of parents attend these meetings. Discussions with parents show that they are pleased with the school's responsiveness in its communication with them. They value the written and oral updates they receive from the school on their pupils' progress.

- Parents are well informed of pupils' predicted and actual targets through the assessment reports. However, they are not involved sufficiently in the target setting process across all core subjects. Moreover, prior to meetings, not all parents receive information based on outcomes from assessment on how best to help their children.

### Quality of the curriculum

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

- Specialist business and enterprise college status encourages those parents with business and entrepreneurial backgrounds to contribute to the design of the work related learning curriculum through work placements and the potential development of a BTEC First Certificate in Business. This helps pupils' preparation for future economic well-being.
- The curriculum is inclusive and the school takes effective steps to involve the parents of pupils from all backgrounds in their children's education. A Somali Club has been formed as well as a peer mentoring group targeted at white pupils. Both initiatives encourage those pupils who are in the minority, to develop a sense of belonging within the school.
- An excellent feature of the school's curriculum is its recognition of the critical importance of the extended family in Asian culture. Older siblings as interpreters, peer mentors, role models and teaching assistants are very successfully involved in the school curriculum. The Extended School has provided courses in ICT, ESOL, literacy, creative writing and parenting skills for parents and the local community and these enhance the curriculum well through family learning.
- The school and the parents work successfully with a complementary school to improve Year 10 and 11 pupils' standards and progress in core GCSE subjects.

### 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 strong commitment to involving parents and carers in the education of the pupils which is shared by faculty heads, heads of subject departments and most importantly by all teaching and support staff, external agencies, parents and the pupils themselves.
- Sound pastoral systems and faculty structures are responsive to parents' concerns and swift to involve parents when there are problems. Good practice exists, but is not systematically in place across all subjects. For instance in mathematics, pupils' tests are sent to their parents so that they can see the progress made; lower school pupils' parents are invited to school to understand how best they can support their children in their Year 9 National Curriculum tests and parents of targeted and underachieving pupils receive information based on outcomes from assessment.
- Parents from all sections of the community are well represented on the governing body and there is an active and effective 'Friends' association.
- The school has developed a well used and effectively designed virtual learning environment, the Learning Eye that pupils and parents access for information about the school.
- Evaluation and planning for the involvement of parents is explicit in the school's main priorities of developing a 'successful learning partnership' between pupils, parents and the school to support pupils' learning.
- The local authority has produced a Parents' Matters booklet and the school has effectively mapped its own involvement with parents against the criteria outlined in the booklet.

## Inclusion

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

- This school is inclusive and works hard to identify pupils' needs as soon as possible. These are met by working closely with parents, the extended family, local voluntary groups, a complementary school and the local Mosque to ensure the best outcomes for each child. This has a positive impact on the whole school.
- The school takes excellent action to involve parents who have language barriers and those who have different cultural expectations of their own involvement in their children's education.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- involving parents more in the target setting process across all core subjects and providing more information for parents about how to help their children based on outcomes from assessment

- monitoring the deployment of parents/ teaching assistants in partnership teaching to ensure that they are used in the classroom more effectively to improve the learning of less able pupils.

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

Meena Wood  
Her Majesty's Inspector