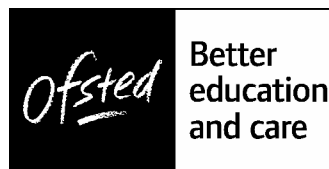


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24 January 2007

Mrs Elizabeth Sims
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sims

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 15 January 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 make at least satisfactory progress overall and good progress in English and mathematics. Their personal development is good. Parents are well involved in their children's progress and personal development. Parents of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities speak

highly of very good communication that helps their children make the best progress they can.

- Pupils' diaries are a very strong means of communication between parents and the school. Parents and form tutors use them well to share information and sign them regularly. All missing diaries are followed up. Pre-printed stickers are used very well; they are placed on specific days in the diary to convey praise or concern, or to inform parents about imminent key events.
- Parents welcome some very rapid responses to their telephone calls to staff landlines or mobile telephones, text messages, emails and letters. Staff provide efficient contact systems for vulnerable pupils. Nevertheless, parents have experienced some problems with telephone access and getting to know the most efficient way of contacting appropriate staff. The school has recognised this and is already making improvements.
- There is good support from a counsellor for vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Letters of praise or concern, and telephone calls, keep parents well informed about their children's successes and difficulties as soon as they arise.

Quality of teaching and learning including assessment, support and guidance

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

- Through careful booking of appointments, the school achieves very high attendance at academic review meetings for Year 7 to 9 pupils. Parents, form tutors and pupils agree three targets which are immediately printed onto stickers and placed at the front of the pupil's diary. Parents help their children work on their targets, but some targets are not specific enough to guide parents' support.
- Parents of older pupils meet subject teachers at well-attended parents' evenings, and parents of other pupils would also like such meetings.
- The school is making improvements in how it reports attainment and target levels.

Quality of the curriculum

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

- Parents find information meetings about tests, GCSE courses and subsequent options clear and helpful.
- The school makes good provision to involve parents in meetings with advisers about career planning, although these are not always taken up.
- The termly newsletter provides useful information about the curriculum and pupils' successes. Its presentation and pupils' contributions effectively encourage participation in trips and activities.

- A few parents contribute their expertise through visiting lessons or helping with extra-curricular activities such as sports matches.

Leadership and management of parent and carer involvement

Leadership and management in relation to parental involvement are good.

- In this small school, staff know the pupils and their parents well. They are strongly committed to working with parents to secure pupils' progress and personal development. Heads of year move up through the school with pupils, so build up close relationships with pupils and parents.
- The school is putting in place increasingly effective evaluation of its activities. It is acting upon the responses and has identified the need to collect parents' views and suggestions more widely.
- The school has taken good steps in planning and management to increase parental involvement. School plans include the improvement of community links, although they focus on the frequency of information for parents. New management structures identify staff with responsibility for some of the links with parents. As a result, the parents' guild is reviving and has organised recent social events. Nevertheless, opportunities are missed for enhancing the impact of parental involvement on all pupils' progress and personal development.

Inclusion

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

- The school works well with parents of vulnerable pupils to help them do their best.
- Its thorough use of diaries and systems for ensuring that targets are discussed with parents makes sure that all pupils are included effectively.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- involving parents more actively in improving all pupils' progress and personal development
- building parents' views and suggestions across the range of the school's work into planning
- conveying targets and attainment more clearly to parents to inform their support
- enabling all parents to make rapid contact with staff pertinent to their children's needs from the outset.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop parental involvement further in conjunction with raising attainment and improving outcomes for children.

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

Gill Close
Her Majesty's Inspector