

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr P Jones
Headteacher
Colmers School and Sports College
Bristol Road South, Rednal
Birmingham
West Midlands
B45 9NY

Dear Mr Jones

Ofsted survey: good practice in capturing the user voice

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 September 2008 to look at work on capturing the user voice.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made, included observation of lessons, meetings with staff and students and scrutiny of documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- The school's strong overarching vision on student voice and engagement is firmly embedded within the two key aims of the school: 'better teaching, better learning'. Leaders involve students well in the school's ongoing evaluation of its practice.
- The school offers many opportunities for students to follow their wishes and interests both within the curriculum and the enrichment programmes.
- Well structured and integrated leadership and learning programmes support students in developing their self-esteem, confidence and strategies for learning. These programmes impact positively on students' educational achievement and personal development.
- As a result students' confidence to voice their views and opinions grows during their time at the school; they develop leadership skills and take responsibility for their own actions, their school and the wider community. They are involved routinely in the planning and evaluation of initiatives and activities within and beyond the school.
- The impact of the student voice is high, for example changes to the school environment, the development of student learning journal and advice and guidance on anti-bullying strategies.

- The school council's well-managed democratic structure supports students in making their voice heard and is developing its role in helping to influence strategic decision-making.
- The school's strong inclusive ethos is built on very good knowledge of individual students' needs, supported by detailed educational and attitudinal data. Those identified as most at risk are well supported by an integrated multi-disciplinary team, which provides specialist targeted support for more vulnerable students.
- Very effective use is made of external links to enhance provision and experiences for students, for example work with primary schools, colleges and national organisations as well as with Birmingham and the Edge consortium which provide wider opportunities for students to participate in decision-making.

Area for development

- Building on existing strong practice, seek opportunities to formalise the involvement of students in strategic planning and evaluation.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the user voice in the centre.

As I explained previously, 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

Mary Ryan
Her Majesty's Inspector