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23 January 2009

Ms S Higgins
The Headteacher
Parliament Hill School
140 Highgate Road
Kentish Town
London
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Dear Ms Higgins

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality of opportunity

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff during our visit on Wednesday 21 January 2009 to look at work promoting equality of opportunity.

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 meetings with:

- yourself, the deputy-head teachers and the school's lead behaviour practitioner
- heads of Years 7, 11 and 12
- the school's Police Officer, Connexions Advisor and the Home-school Liaison Officers
- parents
- students

In addition, brief observations were made of a number of lessons which included: Year 9 I.T., Year 10 Science, Year 9 PSHE/Citizenship, Year 11 English and a group of students on a Year 10 'Motivation and Support' programme. A short review of school documentation was also carried out.

The quality of provision to promote equalities is good.

Features of good practice observed

- The school has successfully recruited a range of staff who reflect the social and ethnic background of their students and who work very successfully to gain the support and confidence of students and parents and support social cohesion in a diverse setting.
- The school's Inclusion Panel provides an excellent and efficient system for identifying the wide range of vulnerable students at Parliament Hill, assessing their needs, implementing and subsequently monitoring support strategies. It is respected by all contributing professionals, internal and external to the school, who consider that their work and contributions are recognised and valued.
- The school works well with a range of agencies to meet the different needs presented by vulnerable students and also works very effectively with a number of specialist external agencies to meet more specific and severe needs e.g. therapeutic drama and art specialists, counsellors and specialist advocate services such as Elfrida Rathbone.
- The close work with feeder primary schools in Year 6 is particularly pro-active and thorough. This ensures that vulnerable students are identified early and that strategies are in place at transition stage. This results in high level awareness of individual needs by teaching staff who are able to track student progress and emotional well-being closely and intervene promptly when necessary.
- The school has a very strong PSHE programme in place which has particular emphasis on issues which the school has identified as being particularly pertinent to its student community e.g. domestic violence, sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol abuse.
- The 'Motivation and Support' programme is highly regarded by students who were at risk of school and social exclusion and who now feel well supported and better prepared to meet their personal challenges. This has resulted in significantly improved behaviour and attendance rates.
- The 'Raising Aspirations' programme has had a very positive impact on increasing levels of attainment and changing the attitudes and aspirations of students who were potential university candidates but who, prior to the programme had not considered it possible due to their personal circumstances and experiences.

Areas for development

- Continue to implement strategies to raise achievement of the vulnerable groups 'at risk' as identified in the School Development Plan.
- Further develop and widen the 'Raising Aspirations' programme to include: more specific support on subject choice for specific professions; and support for those who may wish to progress to employment and other higher level qualifications.
- Continue to address persistent absence and attendance issues.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop promoting equalities in Parliament Hill secondary school.

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.

Ofsted gathers information on the immediate and longer-term impact of survey inspections, both on the institutions themselves, and with a view to improving its own processes. To this end, I should be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the next ten days. We have also just sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Please return your completed questionnaire to either the email or postal address on the form, not to me. We may also contact some schools by telephone after several months in order for us to gain a picture of longer-term impact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Morag Bowden
Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspectors