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Ms K Dawson
Headteacher
Burnley and Pendle Centre
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Dear Ms Dawson

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 24 February 2009 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: observations, learning walks, meeting the school council, lunchtime activities, discussions with students and staff, and scrutiny of documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- The school's strategic vision places the individual student at the heart of all activities in every aspect of its work. The development of user voice is identified in the school's improvement planning and senior managers actively promote its more effective use, such as the recent provision of training for all students on the role of the school council.
- The culture for students to express individual views and shape activities is strong. The school offers a number of opportunities for students to pursue their interests both in the curriculum and across a range of alternative work-related placements.
- In strategic decision-making the strong student voice helps to shape the school's Key Stage 4 curriculum offer. Individual student input determines provision to a significant degree, and within basic guidelines students negotiate and manage their own learning programmes.
- The committed and caring staff members have very good knowledge of individual student needs and abilities, which contributes greatly to the positive relationships

observed in the school. Both formal and informal communication routes to share information work well.

- Mentoring support is multi-layered, impacts positively on students' personal development and contributes well to raising attendance levels.
- Tutorial sessions with personal key workers and the non-judgemental time-out 'duty' facility both impact positively on student progress, providing daily opportunities for students to air views, raise issues and engage in discussion. Students learn to be reflective and show much confidence when expressing their views or providing critical feedback on their experiences.
- The school's ethos engenders trust and mutual respect. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and self-monitor behaviour through a points based reward system.
- The new school council is developing wider opportunities for students to take leadership roles and make decisions which will affect others. Work on developing a 'buddy' system, assessment of externally provided training workshops and modifications to the school's buildings are all in process.
- The school provides flexible support for full-time, respite and part-time students. Particular efforts are made to engage more vulnerable students using negotiated learning programmes and 1:1 support.
- Effective use is made of external agencies, college and mainstream links to enhance the school's provision and the learning experiences of all students.

Areas for development

- Extend the roles and responsibilities of the new school council to enable greater autonomy and a more active role across the school.
- Consider how the students may engage with the management committee to make their voice heard.

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

Linda Clare
Additional Inspector