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Mr R Richardson  
Headteacher  
Gilbrook School  
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Dear Mr Richardson

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 3 March 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 of lessons, learning walks, meeting with the school council and lunchtime activities, discussions with children, staff and parents, and scrutiny of documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- The whole school focus on the well-being and development of each pupil as an individual underpins its strategic vision for user voice. Parents observe that children's progress 'feeds on the confidence' that the school engenders.
- The school's ethos promotes mutual respect. A wide range of opportunities, including weekly circle time, encourage pupils to express their opinions. They learn to be reflective when contributing their views or providing critical feedback on their experiences. As duty monitors and team leaders pupils accept responsibility, gain self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The established school council has both democratically elected representatives from older classes and nominated members from younger groups. Council members gather views and disseminate information. As a result of their feedback to senior managers a number of environmental changes have taken place, such as new seating areas and football goals for the playground.
- Pupils contribute to developing school incentives such as the weekly 'challenge', which is self-assessed and this increases their motivation. They choose structured

play opportunities and regulate their own behaviour to achieve 'Keep your cool' certificates which reward appropriate decision-making.

- The positive behaviour-related points system impacts strongly on attendance, which is good.
- The effective system of teaching support is highly effective in enabling pupils to evaluate their work in core subjects and contribute to their learning. The very good attention paid by the school to the climate of learning ensures that personalised programmes are effective and pupils make very good progress.
- Class groupings are made following careful consideration of cognitive ability, age and levels of behavioural needs. Anger management opportunities support pupil access to learning and every opportunity is taken to reward and praise positive outcomes. These considerations impact positively on personal development.
- The strongly nurturing environment is built around the staff having very good knowledge of pupil abilities, needs and circumstances. This is supported by good use of academic data and thorough analysis of the outcomes from pupil assessment of self and school (PASS) evaluations. As a result, mentoring support focuses on vulnerable children, the very small group of girls and those with additional needs and ensures that the voice of all pupils is heard.
- Effective parental support programmes, appropriate use of external agencies and an extensive outreach programme enhance the school's provision and the learning experiences of all pupils.

#### Areas for development

- Look at how pupils may take more responsibility in the running of the school council.
- Consider strengthening the development of user voice in the school's improvement planning.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Clare  
Additional Inspector