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Mr M Vinall
Principal
Palmer's College
Chadwell Road
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Dear Mr Vinall

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 4 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: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- An open and mutually respectful environment that values student involvement and allows students to voice their opinions to all staff, including the Principal, with a common understanding that students will be listened to.
- A well established range of initiatives that engage and capture the learners' voice. These include a comprehensive range of student surveys and focus groups that help the college to review, evaluate and improve its provision.
- Highly effective formal and informal methods are used to ensure that students are regularly consulted on a range of issues including college events and the content and production of promotional and informative materials.
- An effective voice is provided through the student executive and tutor group representatives, co-ordinated effectively through senior pastoral managers and channelled to all staff and students, senior managers and governors.
- Highly effective use of student supervisors, 'sheriffs', which students value for their additional security and support. Regular feedback from student supervisors provides staff with an important informal channel for the student voice and has

led to more targeted individual support for many students and has contributed to changes in break time arrangements.

- A prominent Study Plus Centre where dedicated staff provide personalised support programmes that are motivated and driven by the student.
- Good use of student representation in a wide range of college processes and activities, including staff selection panels, equality and diversity group and the new building project, that allows students to have a direct input into important aspects of college activity.

Areas for improvement

- Provide student tutor group representatives with appropriate training and development.

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

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Bob Hamp
Her Majesty's Inspector