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Mr S Gittins
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gittins

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 Monday 16 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: the initial meeting with you, further meetings with staff and pupils, an observation of the school council in session, and a scrutiny of relevant documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- The school uses a good range of effective strategies to capture the views of its pupils. These include the analysis of questionnaires, feedback during modules of work, discussions on how to improve writing, and the identification of barriers to being successful at school. Pupils' views are also used to inform projects such as the work of the resident artist and the nature and content of the school's newspaper.
- There are many examples of changes and developments which incorporate the collection of pupils' views. The current work of the school council in helping to review the school's anti-bullying policy is a good example. Another is the organisation of Sports Day by the older pupils for the younger ones.
- The school gives its pupils real opportunities to take responsibility and fully involves them in the planning for these. Pupils say that they feel good about being trusted in this way. They are keen to talk about what they have done and do so with confidence and a clear sense of increasing self-esteem. Examples are the organisation of the Korean visitors' programme, the way that older pupils act as buddies for the younger ones and the judging of competitions.

- Systems for capturing the views of the school's most vulnerable pupils and helping them to develop better personal skills are very good. Members of staff are very adept in gaining their confidence so that real dialogue can help to initiate the dismantling of barriers to progress. The results are the many examples of good gains in reading and writing skills from a very low base and an increased enthusiasm for school through carefully considered projects.

Areas for development

- The high priority given to the capture of pupils' views should be more strongly embedded into the school's formal development planning and review cycle.
- Pupils involved in major projects would benefit from having the opportunity to celebrate their successes directly with the school's governors.

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

Yours sincerely

John Paddick
Additional Inspector