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Ms R Macfarlane  
Headteacher  
Walthamstow School for Girls  
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Dear Ms Macfarlane

Ofsted survey: good practice in the development of leadership skills and effectiveness

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 May 2009 to look at the work that you are doing to develop and sustain high quality leadership in your school and your partner school.

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: discussions with a range of staff and with students; scrutiny of documentation; a number of lesson observations. In addition, evidence was also used from my visit on 13 May to your partner school.

Features of good practice observed

- The school's work to develop the skills and effectiveness of leaders is outstanding. The strong emphasis you place on this work permeates the school.
- The robust performance management system, informed by the school improvement plan and the school aims, ensures that all staff have a common sense of purpose and direction.
- You have created a culture where staff are empowered to take risks in a managed way. They speak very highly of the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities and the confidence of senior leaders in their ability to meet new challenges. Of particular note is the positive impact of senior

leaders recognising and nurturing talents in staff which they had not yet recognised in themselves.

- A key feature of your work to develop leadership is the support given to staff to enable them to lead in areas unfamiliar to them. For example, through joint planning and in-class support by senior leaders, teachers have delivered new courses outside their areas of specialism.
- Staff speak very highly about leadership programmes such as those for aspiring middle and senior leaders. These enable them to have an informed perspective on the next step up as well as equipping them with the key skills necessary to effectively fulfil their current roles. Opportunities to shadow senior leaders further add to the menu of training available to develop leaders.
- Your work in ensuring staff understand how effective leaders develop people and how effective teams communicate ensures there is a common understanding and a common language. This contributes to the positive ethos and culture evident amongst staff in the school.
- Staff at your partner schools value the work with your school because they see it as an opportunity for practitioners to learn from each other.

#### Areas for development

- Students have a range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Particularly commendable is their work on the equality focus group. However, staff are working on developing students' strategic role across the school further.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop your work in this area.

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

Asyia Kazmi  
Her Majesty's Inspector