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Mrs B Sheils
Principal
Solihull College
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Dear Mrs Sheils

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: Girls' and young women's achievement

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, during my visit on 12 November 2009, to examine the causes of girls' and young women's underachievement and long-term economic well-being and the good practice that effectively supports them.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included discussions with staff, observation of parts of two lessons, discussions with two groups of young women, and relevant documentation provided by the college.

Overall, your work on promoting the achievement of young women and in developing their future economic well-being is good. Most young women still make stereotypical choices in terms of their courses and careers. However, within this context, confident and articulate young women make informed choices about career opportunities. The college is highly effective in helping many young women to progress from one level to another and on to higher education and/or employment. In doing so, the college successfully raises the aspirations of young women from differing backgrounds, thereby supporting their long-term economic well-being.

Features of effective practice observed include:

- very good development of young women's knowledge and skills, enabling them to make informed decisions about their long-term career options

- successful outcomes, largely as a consequence of the college's timely and effective support, for many vulnerable young women, including those who are pregnant or are already mothers
- a broad and flexible curriculum offer with personalised provision to engage disaffected or underachieving young women
- an increasing number of young women successfully completing academic and/or vocational courses in science and mathematics and progressing to higher education
- strong provision in children's care, learning and development with a culture that successfully promotes continuing professional development for young women in this curriculum area
- good use of mentoring by young women in motor vehicle studies to support other female students in this curriculum area
- good female role-models on the teaching staff whose support is highly valued by young women.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- recruiting more young women on to computing, construction, engineering and public services programmes
- further developing the college's good liaison work with schools to increase girls' and young women's awareness of the full range of academic and vocational courses and career opportunities.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to promote achievement and develop the economic well-being of young women.

As I explained, a copy of this letter will be sent to the local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Harriet Harper
Her Majesty's Inspector