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08 January 2010

Ms J Brooks  
Headteacher  
Alcester High School Technology College  
Gerard Road  
Alcester  
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Dear Ms Brooks

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 10 December 2009 to look at 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: discussions with senior leaders, staff and the school's Connexions Adviser; observation of parts of two lessons; discussions with two groups of girls and young women; feedback from local employers; and a review of school documentation.

Overall, your work on promoting the achievement of girls and young women, and in developing their future economic well-being, is satisfactory. The wide range of opportunities to follow vocational courses and complete work-placements helps to motivate, and develop girls' and young women's knowledge and awareness of employment, training and education options, particularly in Key Stage 4. Opportunities to develop their financial awareness by exploring the implication of career choices on salary levels and subsequent lifestyle choices are more limited.

Features of effective practice

- Partnership arrangements with local businesses enrich the curriculum well and provide increasing opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes, and to present non-traditional career pathways for young women.

- Strong working relationships with the school's Connexions Adviser support an integrated, personalised and proactive approach to secure well-planned progression routes for young people.
- The work-experience programme, which incorporates letter writing, the preparation of curriculum vitae and practice interviews with employers, makes a strong contribution to young women's skills and confidence in preparing for the future.
- External vocational courses and flexible work-placements contribute well to the motivation, engagement and re-engagement of young women through personalised programmes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making use of the Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance to evaluate the impact of careers and enterprise education, and work-related learning to support improvement, and to inform Key Stage 3 provision
- reviewing and strengthening the sex and relationships education programme to ensure that it meets the needs of girls and young women effectively
- exploring and using the perceptions of girls and young women on aspects of provision; and analysing participation rates in school activities to promote involvement.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikic  
Her Majesty's Inspector