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Mrs L Nicholls  
Headteacher  
Sale High School  
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Cheshire  
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Dear Mrs Nicholls

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 my visit on 8 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 and staff; observation of part 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. A systematic programme of careers education and guidance is effective in developing the personal skills necessary for girls' future economic well-being. However, girls are not consistently aware of the financial implications of their choices. There are a number of positive initiatives to develop students' understanding of different course choices and future employment, but this work is at an early stage of development and is not fully embedded in the school.

Features of effective practice

- Girls achieve well in their GCSEs and particularly in the proportion gaining grades A\* to C in English. Students' progress is monitored carefully and individuals who are at risk of underachieving are identified and supported

effectively. Staff know the students very well and provide individual practical help which is much appreciated by the girls.

- The care, guidance and support and the input provided by Connexions for girls at risk of underachievement or disaffection are strong and draw in the resources of a wide range of agencies. The input from young mothers about the complexities and financial constraints surrounding teenage parenthood has made a very strong impact on those Year 11 girls who were involved.
- There have been some effective initiatives to extend students' understanding of business and applying for a job.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving girls' enjoyment of, and achievement in, mathematics
- extending the variety of work-related learning experiences, links with employers and use of role models, so that staff and students have a better knowledge and understanding of the implications of different career choices and so that gender stereotypes are challenged more effectively
- improving the consistency with which different aspects of sex and relationship education and personal and social education are covered within each year group.

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

Liz Godman  
Additional inspector