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Mrs S Critchley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Critchley

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: the impact that links between parents/carers and schools have on supporting and encouraging young people's achievement, well-being and personal development

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 4 and 5 November 2009.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on how the school's work with parents and carers affects a range of outcomes for students.

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. 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 interviews with staff, governors, individual and groups of parents, and students; and scrutiny of relevant documentation.

The overall effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers is outstanding.

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes is outstanding.

- The school uses its business and enterprise status very effectively in providing an extensive range of work-experience opportunities for students and is especially successful in finding ways to engage with parents of underachieving students.

- Timely and clear communication with parents of students who have difficulties in accessing learning or attending school ensures parents understand their key role and are given every opportunity to work successfully with the school in supporting students.
- The school is successful in providing for the needs of underachieving students or those requiring specialised support. It works closely with parents in its strong determination to overcome any obstacles that may inhibit students' personal well-being or impact negatively on their achievements.
- Parents and carers are kept very well informed of their children's progress through a wide range of strategies such as reward cards, celebration events, home visits, telephone calls, personal letters and email.

The impact of the involvement of parents on the quality of provision

The impact of the involvement of parents on the quality of provision is outstanding.

- The school makes very good use of its website portal to keep parents well informed about the curriculum and how they can support students' learning from home. However, governors and senior leaders acknowledge further work is needed to engage as many parents as possible with using the portal. A kiosk that allows access to the internet, websites and extended services is available to all parents in the school foyer.
- Many opportunities exist for parents to contribute their expertise as a resource for learning. Parents who regularly assist are trained well.
- The school offers pathways for parents to gain qualifications and benefit from learning opportunities provided by the school.
- Students identified as gifted and talented excel in their learning because of the many personalised enrichment opportunities on offer. Through excellent communication from the school, parents are informed well and feel empowered to support their children.
- Parents of students identified as underachieving or having special educational needs and/or disabilities, and who access the school's support unit, say the school knows their children very well. They appreciate and contribute to the school's strategies for the early identification of special educational needs and value their involvement in supporting students to achieve.

The impact of the involvement of parents on inclusion

The impact of the involvement of parents on inclusion is outstanding.

- A close cooperation between the school and its feeder primary schools ensures parents are involved early in the transition and induction of new students. Innovative and highly inclusive strategies of support ensure students and their families settle quickly in the school. Parents say they

value the child-centred focus the school adopts and as a result, parents develop and maintain full confidence in the work of the school.

- Parents have frequent opportunities to work alongside school staff on community-based service and learning activities, securing the successful engagement of students in learning and improving their self-esteem.
- The school can provide many examples of how the inclusion of individual students has improved through its effective work with parents.

The impact of leadership and management on the involvement of parents

The impact of leadership and management on the involvement of parents is outstanding.

- School-improvement plans ensure work with parents is a top priority. There is a focus on providing accurate information and maintaining an open dialogue with parents to foster genuine partnerships with parents that promote better outcomes for students.
- Through a persistent determination to engage with parents and carers, potential barriers are quickly identified and removed by the school.
- The vast majority of parents fully appreciate the school's sensitive and prompt handling of sometimes difficult situations.
- Leaders ensure parents understand and play a full role in working closely with external partners, such as Connexions.
- All staff understand and adhere to school policies that promote very effective partnerships with parents.
- Complaints are rare, and parents say that issues raised are resolved promptly.
- The school seeks parents' views through annual surveys, evaluations following parents' evenings, and individual conversations.
- There is no parent council within the school. However, focus groups, introduced by the school to evaluate new initiatives or contribute to the strategic development of the school, ensure parents influence the development of school policies. You are aware that more opportunities could be provided for parents to be involved in the strategic development of the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- involving parents more in the strategic development of school policies and plans
- promoting increased parental involvement with the school's website portal.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the impact of the work of parents and carers in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, 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

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector