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Ms F Quilty
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Quilty

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, parents and students, during my visit on 7 and 8 December 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff, parents, students and governors; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and an observation of the school at work during one of the new parent-staff surgeries.

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

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes is satisfactory.

- Parents receive well-focused reports about their child's progress, attendance and behaviour. Some parents would like more time at parents' evenings to discuss their children's targets and how best to support their

learning. Some would also appreciate more involvement in making decisions about interventions to support their child.

- Targeted support with parents has helped to reduce gaps in the achievement of some student groups. Similarly, the school has worked successfully with particular students and parents to reduce levels of persistent absence.
- Many parents attend parents' evening. Those who cannot attend the scheduled parents' evenings receive an alternative appointment which accommodates particular circumstances.
- Students appreciate the support of parents and other family members in completing their homework. However, parents would like more detailed guidance about the homework policy. This is currently under review and parents will be part of a whole-school consultation relating to it.
- The majority of parents recognise that they play a vital role in the education of their child. They value communication with the school through the use of email, information on the website, survey letters and school newsletters. Most students see the home-school log book as a positive mechanism for weekly communication between parents and teachers. However, parents' use of this is very variable.

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 satisfactory.

- A few parents use their professional expertise to offer workshop sessions in areas such as media and photography. Others are involved in supporting enrichment activities such as theatre trips. However, the involvement of parents in strategic decisions about revisions to the content, delivery and future vision for the curriculum is more restricted. As a result of consultation with parents, two new parents' committees, one for curriculum and one for care, guidance and support, are to be launched in January 2010 to provide a forum for parents' ideas.
- Extended provision for family learning is emerging through the new Discovery Centre. As a result of a parent survey, a new programme of adult education sessions has been designed along with family clubs, such as the astronomy club. Workshops, such as the staff-parent surgeries, provide a platform for improved communication with senior staff.

The impact of the involvement of parents on inclusion

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

- A strong Catholic ethos supports the school and wider community, including those of other faiths, to worship together, offer good support to each other and celebrate success. Parents attending recent Mass services at school valued the opportunity to meet other parents and worship alongside their children.

- The school works well with external agencies to support vulnerable families and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The impact of this work sustains satisfactory and sometimes good progress. The integration of students and families with physical disabilities, families for whom English is an additional language and parents from different minority ethnic groups, is effective. They receive a warm welcome into the life of the school.
- The chaplaincy and senior staff are highly active in supporting the emotional well-being of students and families who may be distressed or bereaved.

The impact of leadership and management on the involvement of parents

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

- The school's work with parents is gaining a stronger profile in school-improvement planning. The current improvement plan makes thoughtful references to better engagement of parents in learning and improved systems of electronic communication. Feedback from parents is starting to inform changes in policy but is not yet influencing development planning.
- The effectiveness and efficiency of communication with parents is mixed. Good sharing of information through newsletters and the website is not matched by the speed with which enquiries are dealt with. A recent survey highlighted these problems. Senior leaders have responded by reviewing how pastoral support networks and communication channels can operate more efficiently.
- Senior leaders are increasingly canvassing the views of parents. Parent governors have not been proactive in supporting leaders in their efforts to engage better with the parent community. The role of the parent-teacher association does not extend beyond fundraising.
- Complaints from parents are handled in a transparent and fair manner. Parents are encouraged to meet you and your senior staff to resolve issues.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- establishing clearer lines of communication to improve the speed and clarity of the school's response to parental requests and enquiries
- exploring ways of maximising the potential of web-based and other electronic media so that parents can access information about their children and communicate their ideas to the school
- raising the profile and work of parent governors to support senior leaders in increasing the involvement of the new parents' committees in school improvement.

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

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector