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Mrs A Darnell
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Dear Mrs Darnell

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 visits on 23 and 24 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff, groups of parents, including parent-governors, learners representing each year group, professionals from key agencies which support the work of the school and scrutiny of relevant documentation.

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

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes is good.

- The exceptionally high participation rates of parents and carers in consultation sessions, subject briefings and school events demonstrate a very strong commitment to their children's education and engagement with the school.

- The school is able to provide convincing evidence of the impact of parental support, on the students' overall high attainment, through various projects including the 'Starbucks' and 'Rarely Cover' initiatives which directly engage both students and parents in tackling underachievement.
- Pastoral support is a very strong feature of the school's work and underpins its success in raising standards. It is pivotal for engaging parents; particularly for those whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are looked after.
- Parents are keen to support students' learning at home. However, some are less confident about their capacity to offer specialist input, particularly as students progress through the school and subject content becomes more challenging.
- The school is working hard to help parents support their children's learning. For example, the I-Media course offers them access to online materials which they can use to support students. Curriculum briefings from the mathematics and science departments are very useful.

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 good.

- Parents confirm that they are briefed well about their children's progress and targets through their consultation with staff and the regular monitoring information supplied to them.
- The school is able to provide broad evidence to demonstrate how it consults with parents and responds well to their views.
- Direct engagement of parents in classrooms to support learning is limited, although there are good examples of how parental expertise has been used in, for example, the promotion of sex and relationships education and the world of work.
- Transition arrangements from primary schools provide a positive starting point from which parents can engage with the school.

The impact of the involvement of parents on inclusion

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

- The school is highly inclusive. Efforts to meet the needs of all students are exemplary and outcomes for all groups are well above average.
- Curricular provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is modified highly effectively to take account of their needs. The school works very productively with other agencies to provide a match of courses and qualifications to meet the needs of these students.
- Attendance of vulnerable groups is very high; there are few persistent absentees and there are no permanent exclusions. The school works well with families of these students and the strength of these relationships has engendered the commitment of parents.

- Parents of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities work closely with the school through regular case reviews.

The impact of leadership and management on the involvement of parents

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

- You understand the needs of the community well. Collectively, senior leaders demonstrate a keen awareness of individual family circumstances.
- Senior leaders and governors have recognised the need to review the school's strategic approach to engaging parents in their children's learning. A newly appointed deputy headteacher has a specific remit to lead on this work and has already produced a well-considered action plan. Importantly, it will enable the school to develop thorough evaluation procedures from which to ascertain the impact that parents have on supporting learning and progress.
- Parents confirm that the school's senior leaders work hard to ensure that relationships between parents and the school are strong.
- Parents' views are valued and acted upon. There is open access to staff on request. Parents, of all groups interviewed, consider that the school is responsive to their requests for meetings and that staff work earnestly to overcome problems and barriers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- finding ways to evaluate the impact of measures to engage with parents on students' outcomes routinely and thoroughly.

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

Tom Grieveson
Her Majesty's Inspector