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Mr F McCarron
Headteacher
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Dear Mr McCarron

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, students and parents during my visit on 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, parents and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; observation of the school at work; and attendance at an evening event for new parents.

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.

- Yours is a school in which students achieve and attain very highly. There is little or no 'achievement gap' between different groups.
- One cause of this is the very strong and positive relationship that exists between school staff and students and their families. You can point to

many examples of how students' attainment, behaviour and personal development have been improved through such close working and mutual respect. Many parents cannot speak too highly of this.

- Attendance rates are notably above average; any persistent absenteeism is managed well in collaboration with parents.
- The rate of exclusions is falling, partly through earlier work with families. Students are very sensitively re-integrated into the school, with significant positive involvement of parents after any fixed-term exclusion.

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 are given regular and good information about school routines through, for example, weekly newsletters and the school's helpful and easily accessible website.
- The very well-organised and committed Parent, Teacher and Friends Association (PTFA) engages many parents in supporting the school practically and making decisions about expenditure of funds raised. The PTFA constitution, however, does not allow it a significant role as a conduit for parental opinions or suggestions.
- Nevertheless, parents are consulted regularly about their views of the school; you take these very seriously. The school's second specialism, in applied learning, was embarked upon not least because of feedback from families about the relevance of the curriculum to all students.
- Students broadly welcome the considerable involvement of their parents in their learning at home. One key approach to this is the use of very popular and highly informative student journals and planners, which are read and signed weekly by parents and form tutors.
- There are some examples of parents directly supporting the students' learning in school by contributing their skills, expertise or specialist resources; or by arranging work-placements, for example. However, this work is not systematically organised across the school and parents are not specifically inducted, trained or prepared for it.

The impact of the involvement of parents on inclusion

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

- This is a highly inclusive school, which has high expectations of all students and groups. These are usually met and sometimes exceeded.
- The school has a significant population of Polish students. The needs of these students and their families are met very well; all students receive taster sessions in the Polish language, traditions and culture.
- Parents say the school will go the extra mile, and indeed way beyond, to support them at any times of particular sadness or stress.

The impact of leadership and management on the involvement of parents

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

- The school's well-publicised mission statement has in its first sentence a pledge to work closely with families. This explicit commitment is fully understood by staff and it is part and parcel of school life, feeding powerfully into improvement planning and day-to-day working as a matter of course.
- You lead this approach from the front, saying that relationships and ethos are everything. Systems and procedures, while important, follow on. In a supportive but focused style, with high expectations, you model this approach very well, as do other staff in leadership roles. This creates the positive family atmosphere that exists within the school community.
- Governors also contribute very well to this. They are very keen to promote parental partnership; many are current or former parents themselves.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- arranging, as appropriate, for further and more systematic opportunities for parents and carers to contribute their expertise within the school's mainstream curriculum
- considering revising the constitution and way of working of the PTFA so that it can build on its existing strength and be a more systematic, parent-led conduit for parental suggestions and opinions.

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

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector