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21 December 2009

Mrs C Myers
Headteacher
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Hardinge Street
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Dear Mrs Myers

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in literacy

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit with Paul Lowery HMI on 2 November 2009 to look at work in literacy.

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. 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 discussions with senior leaders and middle managers. We also visited parts of lessons, interviewed students and scrutinised school documents, including student progress data and students' work.

Features of good practice observed

- Students eligible for free school meals do well at Bishop Challoner. They make good progress and their attainment at GCSE is significantly above the national average for similar students.
- You and your staff make literacy a priority. You set high expectations and articulate clearly your vision for all students to become literate. The students interviewed appreciate the emphasis on improving their literacy skills and understand the impact on their choice of future career.
- School monitoring systems to monitor students' progress and attainment are rigorous. Students at risk of underachieving in literacy are identified early and the additional support and intervention provided is managed well. Good guidance in literacy and the outstanding provision of

appropriate learning pathways, ensures that white working-class boys in particular are well motivated and make outstanding progress.

- Your focus on literacy across the curriculum has played a significant part in raising overall attainment at GCSE. The students interviewed spoke highly of the high-quality targeted support they receive. For example, students say the specific teaching of technical language and use of writing frames help them to gain good grades at both GCSE and A level. In the lessons observed, the emphasis placed across the curriculum on practical work involving speaking, listening and writing enabled students to make good progress.
- Real-life experiences to develop oracy, such as the Year 9 students visiting a magistrate's court and presenting a case, are enabling students to learn formal language and debating techniques effectively.
- Your inclusive approach to information and communication technology (ICT) is strengthening achievement in literacy. The provision of personal laptops and portable internet access is enabling all students, including the most vulnerable, to have equal opportunities in learning.
- Your extensive partnership work, particularly with local businesses, is improving standards in literacy. For example, the reading partners from a business in the community scheme who work with individual students are contributing well to improving reading levels.

Areas for development

- Increase the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, at GCSE by continuing to raise attainment in GCSE English.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop literacy in your school.

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

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector