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Mrs J Goodall
Headteacher
St Edmund's Church of England Girls' School and Sports College
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Dear Mrs Goodall

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 during my visit on 18 and 19 November 2009. I would be grateful if you would pass on my thanks to staff, parents and students for the warmth of their welcome and also for their contributions to the outcomes of this visit.

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 teaching and support staff, parents, students and local authority personnel; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and observation of the school at work, including your Year 7 tutor day.

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.

- Parents are well informed about what the school does to provide for good outcomes for its students and nearly all support it to some extent. They value the opportunities to receive reports and discuss progress with

teachers. They and their children feel that everyone is working with a shared sense of purpose, and that there are clear priorities focused on the achievement and well-being of learners.

- Many students value sharing reflections about school and their learning with their parents and carers through the systems established by the school.
- Homework is sometimes a collaborative venture with parents and other family members, and students of all ages enjoy this.
- Some parents expressed the wish to know more about when certain topics are taught, and about the significance of certain assessments, particularly at Key Stage 4.

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 small number of parents are very involved in the life of the school. They help to deliver enrichment activities in the curriculum, and were involved in the early stages of planning the range of experiences involved. Some offer practical help and support such as minibus driving and helping at parents' evenings. However, the involvement of parents with decisions about the content, style and delivery of the curriculum is limited in scope.
- Parents have made a contribution to some aspects of the day-to-day work of the school; for example in the formulation of the St Edmund's Way document.
- The school publishes a wide range of useful information about its work which parents value.
- The school works well with outside agencies to engage parents. For example, the proportion of students who are persistently absent is low because there is a concerted effort on everyone's part to see them return to school.
- Provision for the community use of the site outside of school hours is not targeted at specific groups in need of particular provision.
- Innovations such as the learning review booklet in Key Stage 4 have begun to have an impact on promoting good-quality conversations at home on specific aspects of students' progress in school.
- The school does not involve parents extensively in setting achievement targets for their children, but it uses targets as a platform to engage parents and students in important conversations about strategies to ensure good progress. It has clear plans to extend the role of parents in this regard via online reporting.

The impact of the involvement of parents on inclusion

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

- The school is an inclusive community where great value is placed on providing for the needs of individuals. Although few of the students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, there is a culture of respect for and interest in diversity which parents note and appreciate.
- Aspects of provision are having a significant impact on inclusion. For example, the green room is a haven where students can go to receive support, care and guidance and where staff work closely and promptly with parents to tackle concerns.
- Students with English as an additional language are supported very well. A recent conference for students and families whose first language is not English made a significant impact on their sense of belonging to the school and to the community.

The impact of leadership and management on the involvement of parents

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

- The school has a strong commitment to working with parents to ensure the well-being of students and does so as a natural part of its work. It attaches great importance to being welcoming and parents appreciate the success of its efforts.
- The school matches its strategies to engage with parents well to the needs of the community. It is also highly responsive to individual circumstances.
- Communication methods are adapted to meet individual parents' needs, and their sometimes busy lives, wherever possible.
- Your evaluation of the school's work with regard to involving parents and carers in the life of the school is accurate and plays a useful part in its planning.
- The role of parent governors is significant and, through their work on governor committees, they play an important part in achieving better outcomes for students.
- The extent of the impact of involving parents in the school's work for their children is beginning to be evaluated more thoroughly, though sometimes without clearly defined expected outcomes, and there is already a strong culture of gathering feedback, views and ideas following events such as parents' evenings, which are acted upon.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- giving parents more specific guidance about what is taught when, and how this is done in each subject which would enable parents to feel more confident about supporting their child's learning
- providing more precise details for parents of the nature of assessments undertaken, how students prepare for them, and their significance for examination outcomes

- considering how more parents may contribute directly to the curriculum and development of resources, target-setting, and to the thinking about course structures and teaching and learning styles
- gauging with more precision the impact of specific ways of involving parents by defining expected outcomes for groups of students more clearly from the outset.

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

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector