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Mr J Martin
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Dear Mr Martin

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, during my visit on 18 November 2009. Please also extend my thanks to the parents and students to whom I spoke.

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 parents, staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of the school at work.

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.

- You provide a great deal of useful published information to parents and carers before and during their children's time in the school. This material includes school routines, events, guidance and expectations in relation to attendance, behaviour and uniform.

- Target-setting days provide parents and their children with a clear understanding of their progress and how to improve. Some targets are less sharply developmental. However, parents and students are complimentary about the quality of these days and three quarters of parents attended this term. Other events, including open evenings, are similarly well-attended and have attracted an increasing number of parents over time.
- The ongoing flow of information from school to home is very constructive. It encompasses letters, emails, telephone calls and postcards. An innovative scheme giving senior staff mobile telephones aids their accessibility to parents.
- Parents are quickly informed of any problems with attendance, behaviour, effort or attainment. As a result, the school can demonstrate clearly the positive impact on achievement of a series of well-targeted interventions with students and the involvement of parents.
- Day-to-day procedures for promoting attendance and punctuality are very good. The school is working hard to raise attendance and reduce persistent absence by highlighting the impact on achievement to parents.
- The well-organised school website engages parents effectively in the routines of the school. Clearly, this development is not as useful for the few families without ready access to computers.

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.

- Parental expertise is used occasionally as a resource for learning. Some parents volunteer their services and others are invited in due to the close working relationship between parents and the school. The school does not do this systematically and recognises that this is potentially a large and untapped resource.
- Homework is set consistently across the curriculum and parents and students say completion rates are high. You agree that the quality of set tasks is an area for improvement.
- Parents help to review policy through general questionnaires and specific invitation. For example, several attend Building Schools for the Future meetings with senior leaders.
- Parents understand what their children are learning through regular sharing of information and many try to support this learning. Improvements in rates of progress demonstrate that the school's strategies are increasingly effective. Systematic support through both the pastoral and academic systems engages an increasing number of parents in their children's learning.
- Transition processes are effective and allow the school to gather good information before students start school.

- The Parents' Association plays a key role in raising funds and supporting school events. However, it has a much lesser role as a conduit for the parental 'voice' in the school.

The impact of the involvement of parents on inclusion

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

- This is an inclusive school. The way in which parents and carers are engaged by the school makes it more so. The school cares passionately about all its students and takes a multi-agency approach to carers and families that need support. The school has been successful in engaging most, but not all, of the families of students becoming disengaged with education. In many cases, this has resulted in students gaining qualifications and college places that otherwise would have been lost to them.

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 and your senior staff have a clear ethos of a tripartite engagement of home, school and student in their work with parents. The school has an acute awareness of its community and listens to it well. This has resulted in a good and improving relationship with parents.
- The vital role of parents and carers is mentioned positively several times within the school improvement plan. However, there is no overarching statement or policy about parental involvement.
- Governors share your view of the importance of parental involvement. They agree that they could have a more overt role in planning for the development of parental expertise.
- The school is welcoming for parents, as indicated by their rising attendance at school events. The school is increasingly effective in breaking down any barriers parents perceive towards their engagement.
- Parents spoken to commented very favourably about the communication with them, including the appropriateness of content and response time. The small number of complaints the school receives are almost always resolved amicably.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- planning and developing systematically the use of parental expertise to enhance provision for students in the school
- ensuring targets set for students are consistently sharp in explaining what they need to achieve and how best to go about it

- developing homework tasks, so they are more varied and engaging for students.

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

Peter Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector