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Ms R George
Acting Headteacher
Rydens School
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Dear Ms George

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: raising aspirations and achievement: the power of partnership

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 26 November 2009 to look at your partnerships with business.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included scrutiny of documentation, two observations and discussions with you, other staff, students and business partners.

Features of good practice observed

- The school's well-established, successful business partnerships and specialism in business and enterprise are helping students to become confident and independent learners. Students make good progress in business-related courses in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- The use of business partners to enrich the sixth-form tutorial programme, high profile events such as the 'Young Apprentice' and the explicit emphasis on developing enterprise skills have made a powerful contribution to the improvement in sixth-form examination results. There has also been a significant increase in the number of students entering higher education. In 2008/09, 78% of students went on to university compared with 65% the year before.
- Business links and specialism have given momentum to the development of information and communication technology as a key tool for learning across the curriculum. This has been an important factor in raising the

standard of students' work, particularly their presentation and design skills.

- Business partners and enterprise education contribute well to students' personal development and enjoyment of learning. There are excellent opportunities for students to develop communication and leadership skills through enterprise activities. Students are engaged and excited by learning in purposeful, real-life contexts. They enjoy the challenge of thinking for themselves and being accountable for outcomes. Students are right in thinking this good practice could be shared with other subject areas.
- Business partners make a significant contribution to securing students' economic well-being by providing work-placements and mentoring students. They give depth to the information, advice and guidance offered to students by sharing their first-hand experiences and clarifying the expectations that exist in the world of industry and business. Older students benefit from mock interviews with business people and value the feedback they receive about their applications and performance.
- The business and enterprise administrator provides vital continuity in communications with business partners. She also ensures the sustainability of links by balancing the needs of partners and the school effectively.
- Business partners are clear that their links with the school are mutually beneficial. They value the quality of the relationships that have been established and the creativity that students offer. One business partner has joined the governing body where his business skills and clear focus on accountability are appreciated.

Area for development

- Sharing the good teaching and learning practice evident in enterprise activities and business-related lessons to deepen students' engagement with learning in other subject areas.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop partnerships in support of school improvement.

As I explained previously, 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

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector