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Mr T Sherrington
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sherrington

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 20 January 2010 to look at the impact that links between parents/carers and schools have on supporting and encouraging young people's achievement, well-being and personal development.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the aspect, 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 and scrutiny of relevant school documentation.

The overall effectiveness of the school's links with parents/carers and its impact on the outcomes for students are outstanding.

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes is outstanding.

- Parents say that yours is 'a listening school' that challenges itself to improve continually. They are very positive and confident that their views will be welcomed, considered and acted on appropriately.

- Parents and students share and value greatly your school's very high expectations. There is a tangible sense of working together, actively sharing responsibility for supporting the learning and progress of students.
- In the rare instances where parents find it more difficult to work with the school, you have excellent systems which ensure that sensitive and flexible approaches lead to successful outcomes for the students concerned.
- Attendance at parents' evenings and the many other school events is high. Parents comment on the very impressive knowledge and interest that teachers show in their children's progress. Parents also say that the arrangements for supporting students to settle in Year 7 and the sixth form are excellent; these involve specific sessions for parents.
- Parents can communicate with your school easily through a very wide range of media.

The impact of parental involvement on the quality of provision

The impact of parental involvement on the quality of provision is outstanding.

- Many parents take up regular opportunities to support students' learning and personal development through their active participation in a wide range of initiatives.
- Parents were instrumental in enabling the school to build its new sixth-form block, 'The Darwin Centre'. Students say that this has had a considerable impact on improving the quality of their learning experience.
- Parents' views were central to the formation of your school's vision statement for 2015. In addition, their ongoing involvement in decision-making processes has had a considerable impact on several key decisions.
- Recently introduced web-based access to information about students' progress and attendance has been well received by most parents. Nevertheless, you are right to see this as an area for further development and are committed to consulting parents and students about it.

The impact of the parental involvement on inclusion

The impact of the parental involvement on inclusion is outstanding.

- The involvement of parents has a significant effect on inclusion for those students who are in danger of falling behind. Consequently, the gap in achievement between students is very small and, where it exists, narrowing.
- Your school has very effective, personalised systems for involving parents whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- There are well-established, successful programmes in place to work with parents whose children are at risk of underachieving or poor attendance.

The impact of leadership and management on the involvement of parents

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

- Parents recognise that, under your successful leadership, parental engagement is given a very high priority. Your senior team and staff support you very effectively in enabling parents to contribute to raising achievement through an involvement in their children's learning.
- Your school's up-to-date vision statement and development plan identify parents as playing a key role. You evaluate the success of your work with parents carefully. The new parent forum is a very effective means of gauging parental views and shaping policy decisions. You are rightly keen to see that this mechanism develops further.
- Recent changes to your school's intake prompted a thorough and insightful examination, including a Master's-level research project focused on parental engagement. This work ensures that all parent groups are equally involved and have the same opportunities to voice their ideas.
- Governors play an active role in promoting parental engagement. Your well-planned strategies successfully ensure that the governing body and other groups that involve parents are fully representative.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to develop the use of web-based systems by consulting with parents and students to provide up-to-date, accessible and increasingly precise information about students' progress and achievement
- enhancing the role of the parent forum further in shaping the strategic direction of the school as it works towards its vision for 2015.

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

Chris Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector