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Mrs G Holloway
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Holloway

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 20 January 2010 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; observations of teaching and learning including vocational and business-related courses; and discussions with you, other staff, governors and students.

Features of effective practice

- The college is forward thinking and has established a wide range of business partnerships which effectively promotes students' learning and achievement. The economic well-being of the wider community is also supported by the college's working with local businesses and the community benefits from the range of initiatives undertaken with community leaders.
- Business links and enterprise education make an important contribution to students' personal and social development. The skills and knowledge that business partners bring to learning activities help to develop students' organisational skills, creativity and understanding of the world of work.
- Business partnerships and the college's specialism in business and enterprise have been powerful in shaping a curriculum that provides students with choice and flexibility. Consequently, students are more motivated and engaged with learning. They welcome the chance to

participate in exciting, innovative and challenging projects that they help to shape and manage. The college is ambitious to build partnerships that will broaden students' experience and understanding of national and international contexts.

- The college's specialism and business partnerships are influencing teaching and learning methods by extending opportunities for staff and students to engage with purposeful, real-world learning activities. Students are required to be actively engaged with, and accountable for, learning. As a result, they develop high levels of perseverance, responsibility, cooperation, independence and respect.
- Effectively tailored pastoral support and guidance help students make reasoned choices about their futures. For example, the work with Creative Partnerships is effective in raising their aspirations and achievements.
- Students benefit from very good work-related learning. Business partners contribute to the wide range of opportunities offered to students which helps to broaden their horizons.
- Very good professional development opportunities increase staff skills and knowledge of business and enterprise and make them aware of how different curriculum areas capitalise on the school's business links. The Teaching School and Outstanding Teacher programmes are making an effective contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning is a key factor in the success of some business-related courses and cross-curricular projects. Excellent access to ICT is helping to raise standards of achievement.
- Business partners value their work with the school and the quality of the relationships that have been established. They welcome the fresh perspective, organisational skills and creativity offered by the students.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- building on established partnerships to broaden students' experience and understanding of national and international contexts.

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

Ian Jones
Additional Inspector