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26 February 2010

Mr P Strauss
Headteacher
Walter Halls Primary and Nursery School
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Dear Mr Strauss

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 pupils, during my visit on 3 February 2010 to look at your partnership with higher education.

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; three observations of parts of lessons which involved university students; and discussions with you, other staff, pupils, two members of the governing body, partners from higher education and a local charity.

Features of effective practice

- Effective partnerships have been established between the school and universities. The school is also engaged in other partnerships and is constantly seeking to increase the scope of this work. The school's vision for its pupils is very clearly communicated and evident in daily activities. High aspirations are promoted through partnership projects, assemblies, workshops, residential and day visits and a broad range of visitors. Through these activities, pupils are constantly encouraged to appreciate how they have the capacity to influence their own future for the better.
- The school's work with its various partners successfully enhances the curriculum that pupils experience. It provides opportunities for pupils to increase their awareness of what higher education can offer, and expands their understanding of the choices available to them. Extra-curricular

activities are also supported through the partnerships. Pupils can attend after-school clubs that would otherwise not be offered, such as Spanish and 'Mad science'.

- Partnerships provide highly effective support for pupils' personal development. Many pupils are able to articulate clearly how working alongside students from universities has a positive impact on their attitude to work and their ambitions. The school believes pupils' self-esteem, confidence and work ethic develop through the partnerships, and it is beginning to gather evidence to support this view in a more systematic way.
- Past pupils who have moved to a local secondary school are very positive about the impact of the school's partnerships with universities. These pupils identify visits to universities and working alongside students as reasons for wanting to go on to higher education. They acknowledge they will have to achieve well to realise their ambitions and speak of the importance of investing in their future now.
- To sustain their aspirations and ongoing well-being, the school maintains contact with vulnerable pupils, and their families, after transition to secondary school. Very effective liaison with a local charity supports specific pupils, who have been identified by the school and are targeted for individual intervention programmes.
- The school is effective in recognising the needs of individual pupils and selecting partnership activities and projects that are tailored for their needs. This means that pupils with talents in specific areas are catered for well. For instance, pupils who are gifted in sports have visited a university with a specialism in this area and have worked alongside undergraduates to improve their skills.
- Partnerships are supported well by the governing body. Good liaison between governors and partners is helping to embed existing links and develop new ones.
- Leadership and management roles within the school have been extended as a result of partnerships with higher education; staff in these roles work very effectively to ensure that pupils derive the maximum benefit from partnerships. Clear and well-organised communication is recognised by all parties as being critical to the success of arrangements.
- Undergraduate students work in school in a variety of roles. The 'Students in Classrooms' initiative offers opportunities to contribute to the school's vision of raising ambition and aspiration. A 'Law Pro Bono' course, delivered by undergraduate law students to Year 5 pupils, encourages an understanding of how the national justice system works.
- The universities that work with the school are confident that they derive significant benefit from the partnerships. In addition to tackling their desire to contribute positively to local communities, they recognise that individual students enjoy enhanced personal development. University students gain a sense of fulfilment and reward through their work with the school.

- In working with the school, some undergraduates find themselves in a social environment which is new and unfamiliar to them. They report experiencing a growing awareness of diversity and appreciate how beneficial this will be to them. In addition, their contribution adds value to their employability and offers them an insight into careers in education. As a consequence, some students confirm their intention to work in education; others have simply found it useful to gain an understanding of how schools operate.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- evaluating the impact of the school's work with higher education systematically.

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

Chris Moodie
Additional Inspector