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Mrs R Harker
Principal
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Dear Mrs Harker

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 and the students and parents I met, during my visit on 3 and 4 February 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: meetings with you, middle leaders, other senior staff and students; conversations with parents; observation of some of the Year 11 review meetings; and a scrutiny of documentation.

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

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes is good.

- The majority of parents are supportive of the school's ambition for its students. Because of your work to reduce barriers and establish trusting relationships between home and school, many parents are willing to work with your staff to improve the outcomes for their children.
- You provide a range of opportunities for parents to extend their understanding of what their children learn in school and how this learning is organised. Parents are becoming more confident in using this knowledge to encourage and support their children's progress.
- The proportion of parents with whom the school is able to have a positive working relationship is good because of the imaginative and flexible approaches taken by your staff to organise contact between home and school.
- Through the good systems established in the school, students and their parents currently have access to a wide range of information about their achievement and the development of their learning skills. Your staff use this data well to involve parents in supporting their children.
- Subject information evenings are not well attended. Relatively few parents choose to play a very active role in their children's learning.
- Homework is given high status and value by the school and it contributes well to students' learning.

The impact of parental involvement on the quality of provision

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

- Parents are well informed about their children's attainment targets and they have the opportunity to contribute towards their achievement in significant ways.
- Your plans to develop the website are capable of giving it the potential to be a valuable way of securing better levels of involvement of parents in their children's learning.
- You try very hard to gain a clear understanding of parents' views about the work of the school and use this information to plan for improvements. However, the extent and the significance of this are not apparent in the development plan.
- Some parents support extra-curricular activities, such as school productions and special events, but the extent of this engagement is currently very limited.

The impact of the parental involvement on inclusion

The impact of the parental involvement on inclusion is outstanding.

- You have successfully adapted traditional school structures and systems to meet the needs of your students and their parents. The role of the tutor is clearly central to the well-being and achievement of children and this is reflected in the size of tutor groups and the way that they have been

organised. This enables tutors to have close and regular contact with parents and to work with them to meet the needs of individuals quickly and appropriately.

- Some students have specific and complex needs. A range of well-trained and experienced specialist staff, employed by the school and others working in partnership arrangements with other local schools, works closely with these children's parents to enable support from the school and a range of outside agencies to secure their achievement and well-being.
- You monitor the outcomes for all groups of students regularly and closely. Current data indicate that there are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students, for example.

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 staff know and understand very well the challenging context in which the school works with children and their parents. You show considerable commitment to meeting their needs and obtaining the very best outcomes for students by working with parents.
- Your staff work very hard to establish good links with all parents and the extent of their success is impressive.
- Parents feel that the school is welcoming and friendly, and many have confidence that you want to work with them to do the best for their children.
- You are beginning to establish ways of working with parents to develop policies and decide on how they will be implemented. For example, you have recently begun to work with parents to increase the effectiveness of homework.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- exploring strategies to secure the engagement of a larger proportion of parents in learning projects and special school events
- involving more parents in children's learning in lessons and also in special projects, visits and extra-curricular activities
- involving parents more often at the earlier stages of development planning in certain key projects
- making the work you do with parents clearer in the development plan to enable you to evaluate its impact better.

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 previously a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector