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13 October 2006

Mr C Bateman  
Headteacher  
The International School and  
Community College East Birmingham  
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Dear Mr Bateman

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Attendance for Learning in  
Secondary Schools

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during  
my visit on 11 October 2006 to look at your work in promoting attendance.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the  
end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with  
staff, local authority staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and  
observation of three lessons and lunch time.

The overall effectiveness of your work in promoting attendance was judged  
to be satisfactory but the school attendance rate remains inadequate.

#### Achievement and standards

- Standards achieved by pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are below national averages. There was a significant rise in pupils achieving 5A\*- C or equivalent from 34% in 2004 to 50% in 2006. Attendance across the school also increased from 84.1% in 2004 to 88.1 % in 2006 this included a significant improvement for Year 11 pupils. Achievement between Key Stages 2 to 4 remains below average but is rising slowly.
- The school has clear data analysis linking attendance and attainment but does not thoroughly analyse rates of progress in relation to attendance.
- Particular programmes have been effective for example, intensive work with a year group with particularly poor attendance resulted in 66% of

the pupils significantly reducing their absence rates and as a result standards increased.

- Of the pupils interviewed there was evidence of more than half making satisfactory or better progress.
- The school has established some useful sessions to help improve progress for pupils who have missed lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4. However the system is less reliable for pupils with sporadic attendance and pupils believe teachers are less concerned about helping them to make up for lost time in Key Stage 3.
- Throughout observations during the visit behaviour was good overall.

#### Quality of teaching and learning in relation to attendance

- The teaching observed was of variable quality, ranging from good to inadequate in motivating pupils to start quickly and persevere with their work.
- When lessons actively engaged pupils and teachers provided a clear indication of how to improve the quality of their work, pupils were motivated and keen to achieve as much as possible.
- In one lesson the use of the praise system helped pupils' motivation to complete more work.
- The majority of pupils felt that there was someone who was concerned about their attendance. A group of pupils felt that concern about their attendance was not sufficiently linked to helping them raise their achievement.

#### Quality of curriculum in relation to attendance

- The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of vocational subjects that increase the motivation of pupils to attend school. The option of short vocational courses is good as it enables pupils who have had unsatisfactory attendance to be given another chance to obtain qualifications.
- The school has successfully worked closely with other agencies to provide interesting vocational work experience and training for pupils who are disaffected with school.
- A focus on improving attendance using a cross curricular approach last year was successful and another module is planned for later this year.

#### Leadership and management of attendance

- The leadership and management in relation to attendance is satisfactory overall.
- The assistant headteacher with responsibility for attendance has provided good leadership on this issue. Working well collaboratively with the designated education social workers they have established a suitable range of strategies to support and encourage improved attendance has been established. There has been suitable evaluation of the strategies specifically employed to improve attendance.

- The attendance team have given the need to improve attendance a high profile across the school; displays and events continue to keep this active. However the links between attendance and achievement resulting in improved future opportunities for the pupils are not always clearly demonstrated.
- There is still too much inconsistency in ensuring pupils are engaged in lessons and difficulties with behaviour result in too many fixed term exclusions.
- The newly appointed headteacher has a good understanding of the needs of the school and has already started to build on previous practice to encourage more involvement from parents and the local community.
- Attendance is promoted as being an issue for all staff in the school and, staff are reporting attendance and punctuality to their lessons. However there remains too much inconsistency in the use of whole school systems and positive relationships to actively engage pupils.

## Inclusion

- Inclusion is satisfactory for pupils with attendance below 90%. There is a suitable concentration on individual cases as well as initiatives that focus on pupils with different levels of attendance and or particular year groups.
- The monitoring of data does not identify different characteristics of pupils that are over represented in low attending groups.
- The lack of tracking and analysis of attendance and achievement impedes pupils' rates of progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- more active involvement of pupils in the evaluation and development of whole school systems for example, the behaviour management system
- establishing clearer links between attendance and achievement and ensure this is embedded in positive practice by staff throughout the school
- analysing information about pupils to identify different groups in order to develop whole school strategies that will help improve attendance.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop your attendance work 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 Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson  
Her Majesty's Inspector

*cc LA*