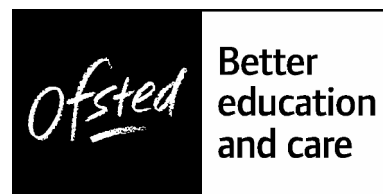


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20 October 2006

Mrs Childs
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Childs

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 18 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, students, and representatives from the local authority; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and observation of two parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of your work in promoting attendance was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

- The school has made steady and significant progress over a number of years in reducing its overall rate of absence.
- For the few students tracked on the inspection, levels of engagement and achievement were at least satisfactory and in many cases good.

Quality of teaching and learning

- The school uses an appropriate range of measures to emphasise to students, parents and staff the links between attendance and pupil achievement.
- The great majority of staff relate well with students.

- Effective learning and personal support is provided to those with the greatest needs. This includes opportunities for poor attenders to return to full participation in classroom activities on a phased basis.
- The school is making the development of personalised learning and associated teaching strategies a major focus of its improvement planning.
- In the two lessons seen, the students with attendance problems were effectively engaged with the work of the class. The quality of teaching and learning was good.

Quality of curriculum

- The quality of the curriculum in supporting attendance is good.
- The school has substantially expanded the range of activities offered at Key Stage 4, including part-time attendance at college and extended work experience placements. This has enabled more customised packages to be put together to meet students' individual needs.

Leadership and management of attendance

- Leadership and management in relation to attendance are good.
- Attendance is an integral part of the school's overall development planning and is given high priority within this.
- Reasons for pupil absence are challenged robustly when necessary.
- Individual pupil attendance is monitored regularly and both the planning and review of action to secure improvement are detailed and rigorous.
- The collection and analysis of aggregated attendance data is satisfactory but has been somewhat hampered hitherto by a reliance on paper systems for pupil registration.
- Good use is made of rewards and sanctions for students and parents.
- Good steps are taken to invite pupil views on how the school operates.
- There is effective collaboration with other schools, especially in terms of easing the transition from primary school for students identified as potentially vulnerable.
- Liaison with most other agencies is a strength.

Inclusion

- The provision for inclusion in relation to attendance is good
- Most of the students interviewed said that there was at least one member of staff who took a particular interest in their well-being and progress.
- Most said similarly that there was at least one person who they could approach with confidence about any problems.
- Effective steps are taken to address bullying.
- There are a number of sources of personal support for students with problems.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- using the detailed attendance information now becoming available to extend the range of analysis undertaken, for example to compare pupil attendance at lessons by individual teacher and across the different academic subjects as well as to establish more clearly for students and parents the impact of attendance on achievement
- developing more precise outcome measures for evaluating the success of strategies to 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

J.N. CORDWELL
Her Majesty's Inspector

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