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Mrs A Jordan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jordan

Ofsted survey: good practice in capturing the user voice

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 March 2009 to look at work on capturing the user voice.

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 made included: observations of sessions, discussions with pupils and staff from the school and scrutiny of documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- Enabling pupils to air their views about how they can follow realistic goals and access vocational training is at the core of the school's planning. The school's 'Participation Charter' clearly sets out the pupils' right to give their views and opinions in any decision that will affect them.
- Daily practices and structures allow pupils plenty of opportunities to appreciate the benefits of communicating with staff and finding ways of working with them. Pupils contribute directly to the school's planning for improvement through discussions with the school's senior leadership group. This has resulted in their views being incorporated into the school's strategy to combat bullying.
- Preparatory, vocational and personal development programmes are tailored to individual pupils. These are relevant to their aspirations because pupils' voice is very effectively gathered in devising them.
- Pupils are consulted directly about what will help them with communication, who they want to talk to and how they can best find out about things. The

findings from these consultations have been successfully used to adapt processes in the school, including the organisation of the curriculum and enrichment activities.

- The school council successfully gathers the views of pupils and has been instrumental in introducing improvements, for example the provision of floodlighting for the sports area and adaptations to the lunchtime menus. A pupil representative has recently been elected to serve on the school's governing body.
- The staff use a broad range of skills and methods to enable pupils to communicate their feelings. They understand the pupils' communication needs and very effectively use structures, scripts and visual prompts to develop pupils' expressive language. Well-planned support for groups and individuals builds pupils' social understanding, self-esteem and confidence. Consequently, pupils express their ideas in a safe, nurturing and respectful context.
- Very specific support for particularly vulnerable pupils involves staff in finding joint solutions to minimise barriers to learning. Liaison with parents and carers and outside agencies is highly developed. This ensures that pupils remain engaged in learning, feel safe and secure and make good progress in gaining skills for life.
- Pupils are involved in consultations beyond the school's setting, for example, with university and national charities. These consultations give pupils the opportunity to influence policy in wider settings and contribute to the business planning for future projects.

Areas for development

- Consult pupils about how effectively the school gathers their views.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the user voice in the school.

As I explained previously, 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

Barbara Crane
Additional Inspector