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Mrs S Mbubaegbu
Principal
Highbury College
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PO6 2SA

Dear Mrs Mbubaegbu

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: girls' and young women's achievement

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 18 November 2009, to examine the causes of girls' and young women's underachievement and long-term economic well-being and the good practice that effectively supports them.

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: discussions with staff; observation of parts of two lessons; discussions with two groups of young women; feedback from local employers; and relevant documentation provided by the college.

Overall, your work on promoting the achievement of young women, and in developing their future economic well-being is good with some outstanding features. Young women make very good progress in developing personal, social and work-related skills and demonstrate a good awareness of career opportunities. The well-integrated 'Support to Achieve' programme has been successful in supporting the most vulnerable students to stay on course and achieve as have the re-engagement programmes.

Features of effective practice

- An effective focus on early success and a good 'Support to Achieve' programme has raised success rates for the most vulnerable.
- Young women develop very good personal skills including increased self-confidence and self-esteem, work-readiness and work-related skills. They have a good general awareness of the opportunities in the workplace to

promote their future economic well-being. The college encourages students to make a positive contribution through its community projects and leadership academy. This works particularly well for the most vulnerable students who come from very deprived local communities.

- Good teaching and learning place a strong emphasis on developing work readiness and mutual respect.
- There is a flexible and personalised approach to adapting the curriculum for vulnerable girls and young women needing high levels of support, combined with re-engagement programmes for the most vulnerable.
- There are strong local partnerships with schools, employers and the local authority.
- Data are used very effectively by the senior management team to monitor the impact on success rates of different types of support, and to make changes to improve.
- The support arrangements are integrated very well and are highly effective in identifying, supporting and monitoring the most vulnerable.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the attendance of girls and young women on some courses, particularly hairdressing and animal care
- improving the progression rates to level 4, Higher Education courses to meet local needs
- increasing the numbers of young women in non-traditional courses, particularly construction, engineering and automotive studies.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to promote achievement and develop the economic well-being of girls and young women.

As I explained, a copy of this letter will be sent to the local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Linda Truscott
Her Majesty's Inspector