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Mr P Travis
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Travis

Ofsted 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, during my visits on 6 and 9 October 2009, 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, 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. 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 parents, staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of the school at work.

The overall effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers was judged to be good.

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes is good.

- You provide a great deal of useful information to parents and carers before and during their children's time in the school, including through weekly newsletters. This information is principally about school routines

and events, and expectations over behaviour and uniform. The prominence of good quality information is one way you show the high value placed on parents as partners of the school. You have evidence to show that this partnership impacts positively on achievement. For example, well kept individual students' files show clearly how work with parents has enabled many students to stay on track, or improve further their progress.

- Much very useful work to achieve this is carried out by the well led and complementary pastoral and progress teams. They, along with senior staff, judiciously and sensitively use a range of methods, including email, to involve parents quickly and effectively in wide range of circumstances. Equally, parents feel they can contact the school readily, through known and clear channels, and say they receive helpful responses quickly.
- Day-to-day procedures for promoting high attendance are good. This includes the prompt and sensitive involvement of parents.
- Students of all ages speak very highly of the school's well-organised virtual learning environment (VLE) as a means of engaging their parents. Clearly this is not as useful for families without ready access to computers.
- Parents and carers receive less general information about the curriculum and learning processes than they do about routine matters. However, this is being redressed to some extent through the provision of curriculum newsletters for year groups.

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

- In response to some recent underachievement by some lower attaining students, you have successfully changed aspects of the curriculum for individuals, in consultation with their parents.
- Parents are well-informed about the assessments made of their children and often contribute helpfully to discussions about progress and targets.
- Homework is set regularly and, generally, consistently across the school.
- There are few opportunities for parents to contribute their ideas and opinions, or to be consulted, corporately. Annual questionnaires, to ascertain levels of parental satisfaction, while useful, have a low return rate.
- Although there are some examples, overall there are few opportunities for parents to contribute their expertise or time to the school to enhance the curriculum and learning.
- The Parents' Association has a high profile and is well-organised and led. You support its work wholeheartedly. It plays a key role in raising funds

and supporting school events. However, it has a much lesser role as a conduit for parental 'voice' in the school.

The impact of the involvement of parents on inclusion is good.

- This is an inclusive school. The way in which parents are involved with the school makes it more so. The school's work with families improves outcomes for many students and, especially, those underachieving or at risk. In some cases, it reduces the possibility of formal exclusion.

The impact of leadership and management on the involvement of parents is good.

- You believe unequivocally in the vital role played by parents in their children's education. Your sensitive example in this area shows in the way that this is understood well by staff, that systems for engaging individual parents are in the school's fabric, and that parents feel their involvement is valued. There is, however, no overarching statement or policy about parental involvement.
- The vital role of parents and carers is mentioned positively several times within the school improvement plan. The review of the plan does not show clearly how parents have contributed to outcomes for students; however, this is known by the school in less formal ways.
- Parents on the governing body occupy key positions, including that of chair. Governors share your view of the importance of parental involvement, agreeing that more can be done systematically to enable parents as a group to have more of a say in the school's development.
- There are few formal complaints about the work of the school from parents. Parents usually find that any concerns are dealt with well through informal and other channels.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- considering ways in which parents and carers, as a group, could be better consulted about and contribute their ideas systematically to the school's ongoing development
- finding ways of better using the expertise and time resource within the parental body to support students' learning.

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 in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector