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Mrs M Stacey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Stacey

Ofsted 2009-10 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, parents and pupils, during my visit on 8 and 9 December 2009.

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 pupils.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included discussions with you, the teaching and support staff, parents, and pupils. I also scrutinised relevant documentation and spoke informally with parents.

The overall effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers is good.

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes is good.

- Pupils are clear that there is an expectation from the school that their parents will be involved in their learning through overseeing their homework. The majority meet that expectation. Many parents use homework books and reading records as a means of communicating with teachers. Half-termly information on the curriculum is supplemented with helpful ideas for parents to follow up themes at home.

- Parents have a strong commitment to supporting social events and celebrations, such as saints' days. Attendance at these events, and at concerts in which their children perform, is high. Many support activities such as the 'cookathon'. Parents who attended workshops on mathematics and information and communication technology feel more confident to support their children.
- Attendance at parents' evening, to discuss their children's learning and progress, is also high. Staff ensure that alternative times are available to suit parents' circumstances.
- Targeted work with some parents is having a positive impact on reducing persistent absence. Generally pupils' attendance rates are rising.

The impact of the involvement of parents on the quality of provision

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

- Many parents accompany their children on trips, and a few assist in class. Although individual staff make use of parents' knowledge and expertise in, for example, different faiths, there is no systematic approach to harness parents' expertise to enhance pupils' learning.
- Good and regular opportunities to share in joint learning, such as reading week and mathematics day, are not always taken up by parents. Participation is much higher in some year groups, suggesting that some staff are more proactive than others in encouraging parental involvement. Parents' views on the benefit of such activities are not collected in a systematic way.
- Parents feel well informed through parents' evenings about their children's learning and progress, where their children's targets are shared. In Years 1 and 2, these are presented alongside 'home targets' that will help the pupils to meet their school targets. Parents of children in the Nursery and Reception classes are encouraged to contribute information about their children's learning and progress to their 'All About Me' books.

The impact of the involvement of parents on inclusion

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

- Your staff provided some telling examples of how they have helped parents and children to overcome potential barriers to learning. This includes close liaison with parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including some with medical needs, and strong support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Your excellent work with Polish families, who are new to the country, includes translation of all key documents, provision of interpreters, curriculum modification, and general support for their social and welfare needs. This work has been recognised by the local authority and the school shares its expertise widely with local schools.

The impact of leadership and management on the involvement of parents

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

- You and your staff have a strong commitment to making parents welcome in school. Many parents commented on the family atmosphere in the school and the sense of partnership in children's learning. They welcome your informative weekly newsletter about events in the life of the school and the parish.
- Parents are clear that communication is the key factor underpinning any home/school partnership. They speak highly of the approachability and ready availability of staff at the beginning and end of each day. As a result, concerns are generally resolved informally and complaints are rare.
- Your commitment to strengthening partnerships further is exemplified by the recent completion of building works to provide a dedicated parents' room. Plans are in place to use the room for family learning, including English classes for parents. Through the provision of nursery education since September, you are seeking to engage parents early in the learning process.
- Two groups, who started during the last academic year, hold much promise for further engaging parents as partners. The Chaplaincy Group (welcoming committee) is currently seeking ways to involve parents more in life of the school and in decision-making. The Parents Club in the Reception Year helped to explain to new parents how their children learn.
- Increasing parental involvement is a key feature of the school's development plan. However, targets are not sharp enough to help evaluate the impact of actions in terms of outcomes for pupils. Consequently, you find it difficult to attribute the rise in pupils' standards and their improved achievement to engagement with their parents.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- auditing parental expertise and using this in a systematic way to enhance pupils' learning
- being sharper about the intended outcomes of parental involvement in their children's learning and finding ways of measuring the impact
- formalising methods of seeking parental views and involving them further in decision-making.

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

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector