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Mrs Christine Fraser
Castle Business & Enterprise College
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Dear Mrs Fraser

Ofsted 2009/10 survey inspection programme: raising aspirations and achievement: the power of partnership

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 26 January 2010 to look at your partnerships with business.

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: scrutiny of documentation; observations of teaching and learning, including vocational and business-related courses; and discussions with you, other staff, governors and students.

Features of effective practice

- Your school operates as a thriving and cohesive community. Governors, staff and students share common values and have a clear view of what they want to achieve. Partnerships are at the heart of your commitment to continuous improvement and to helping all students realise their potential. Business links and specialism in business and enterprise have contributed significantly to a curriculum that is closely matched to students' needs. These developments are ongoing across the curriculum.
- Business partnerships and enterprise activities make an important contribution to students' personal development and enjoyment of school. There are excellent opportunities for students to develop confidence and communication and social skills. As a result, they are better placed to face the challenges of adult life and the world of work.

- Students appreciate their involvement in enterprise and business activities because they see their relevance to the real world and the choices they may make in the future. The involvement of community groups and local businesses in these activities is key to their success.
- Enterprise education is influencing teaching and learning methods with an emphasis on developing students' problem solving and thinking skills. The clear strategy for assessing enterprise skills, in conjunction with careful and detailed planning, is helping to ensure consistency in teaching and assessment practice.
- The school shares the benefits of its partnerships with local schools. Outreach work enables community partners to develop their understanding of the challenges facing students who, in turn, benefit by developing their learning skills and making a positive contribution to the community.
- Leadership responsibilities have been distributed successfully as roles have been developed to sustain partnership work and increase its impact on improving outcomes for students.
- Business partners believe their close working relationship with the school is mutually beneficial. They welcome the opportunity to contribute to the achievement and development of students.
- The accommodation, facilities and learning resources for enterprise education have been improved and developed to meet the specific needs of students. The quality of provision contributes very well to students' future economic well-being.

Areas for development, which we discussed include:

- continuing to develop the range of enterprise activities across the curriculum.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop partnerships in support of school improvement.

As I explained previously, 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

Ian Jones
Additional Inspector