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Mr S Fell  
Headteacher  
Harlington Upper School  
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Dear Mr Fell

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 students, during my visit on 21 and 22 January 2010 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, as well as looking at key areas of the aspect, the visit had a particular focus on how the school's work with parents and carers affects a range of outcomes for your 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: meetings with the headteacher and other senior staff; face-to-face and telephone conversations with 16 parents and a further 12 on the Parents' Forum; the opportunity to see the Year 11 parents' evening; meetings with middle leaders, tutors and students; scrutiny of documentation and nationally produced data; and meetings with governors and representatives of local authority support services.

The overall effectiveness of the school's links with parents/carers and its impact on the outcomes for students is outstanding.

## The impact of parental involvement on outcomes

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes is outstanding.

- Parents have a confident and clear understanding of the nature of the partnership between them and the school. As a result, students feel very well supported in their learning.
- Parents show high levels of trust in the school and are also pleased with your staff's willingness to respond quickly and thoughtfully to any concerns and questions that they may have.
- The school provides opportunities for parents to learn about teaching strategies across a number of subjects, and many parents value the information evenings organised to enable them to support their children at key points in their time at the school. Parents' evenings and other events are very well attended and make an important contribution to the achievement of students.
- The school provides extremely well-targeted support for groups of students who may otherwise underachieve. Parents are closely involved in the mentoring process and these groups frequently show outstanding progress towards their targets.

## The impact of parental involvement on the quality of provision

The impact of parental involvement on the quality of provision is outstanding.

- The school invites parents to join the Parents' Forum. This group of about 25 parents works closely with you and your senior team to influence the developmental thinking of the school. They clearly contribute significantly to strategic improvement planning.
- Parents who are not able to play an active role in the work of the Parents' Forum are still confident that the school values their views and will act on any suggestions that they make for how practices and procedures may be improved further.
- Your staff actively seek the engagement of parents in identifying ways in which students can achieve the ambitious targets they are set. Tutors maintain impressively high levels of communication with parents about the successes of their children, and ways in which achievement may be improved further.
- The school works very successfully with other local schools to offer a wide range of extended services to meet the needs of parents and their children. A number of parents are involved in lessons and in a wide range of extension activities in the curriculum. The school has plans to extend this further.

## The impact of the parental involvement on inclusion

The impact of the parental involvement on inclusion is outstanding.

- Many of your students come from relatively advantaged and supportive home backgrounds, but a few are in need of targeted support, advice and guidance about issues such as further training, sixth-form and higher education opportunities. Your staff consistently demonstrate impressively high levels of care when responding to parents who would benefit from this support. Over recent years, this has helped to reduce the number of students who are not in education, training or employment after leaving school.
- You have established a culture within the school in which every child is well known and each individual's needs are met. Some parents have speedy access to key support staff.

The impact of leadership and management on the involvement of parents

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

- You, your governors and your staff clearly value the very close and trusting working relationships you have established with parents. You seek and incorporate their views at an early stage of your strategic planning to improve outcomes for young people.
- While parents' contributions feature in parts of the school development plan, the extent of their involvement is currently not explicit enough. This hinders an accurate evaluation of the impact of their contributions.
- Parents feel that the school is very welcoming and approachable.
- Staff are enthusiastic in keeping parents fully informed and involving them in day-to-day decisions about their children's welfare and achievement. The high quality and efficiency of this communication between home and school (particularly by email and telephone) is clearly valued by parents. They particularly value the responsiveness of the school to any concerns they may have. This leads to any problems being resolved quickly and effectively in the majority of cases.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that opportunities to secure parents' contributions to the school's development are explicit in the school improvement plan, so that evaluations of their impact can be made accurately and usefully
- broadening the involvement of parents in curriculum delivery to capitalise on their considerable pool of expertise and life experiences.

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

Alan Taylor Bennett  
Her Majesty's Inspector