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Mrs H Sullivan-Tighe
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sullivan-Tighe

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 3 and 4 November 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 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 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 is satisfactory.

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes

The impact of parental involvement on outcomes is satisfactory.

- You provide a great deal of useful information to parents and carers before and during their children's time in the school, including through quarterly newsletters, a parents' guide and the school website. This

information includes school routines, events, guidance and expectations of attendance, behaviour and uniform.

- The introduction of target-setting days has provided parents and their children with a clear understanding of their progress and how to improve. You have evidence to show that this partnership impacts positively on achievement where parents attend regularly. However, although attendance at these days is increasing, more than a third of parents failed to attend the most recent day. You are aware that the quality of the target-setting conversations with parents can be inconsistent and depends on the expertise of the learning coach.
- The change to learning coaches being the first point of contact within a mini school structure has given parents clearer lines of communication with the school which they appreciate. Parents feel they can contact the school easily and say they receive helpful responses quickly.
- Day-to-day procedures for promoting attendance and punctuality are effective. However, although attendance has improved, it remains below the national average.
- The well-organised school website, particularly the parental portal with access to assessment and other data, has the potential to engage parents in their children's progress. Unfortunately, access problems with the portal have deterred a number of parents from using this facility. Clearly, this development is not as useful for families without ready access to computer.
- Parents say that you have resolved concerns they raised about behaviour at the time of the previous inspection.

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 satisfactory.

- You have recently re-launched a parents' forum to capture the views of parents on changes made to provision. This has proved very useful.
- Homework is now being set more regularly but there have been 'teething problems' with the new projects including administration and variable quality of set tasks.
- The majority of parents are suitably informed about their children's assessments and contribute helpfully to discussions about progress and targets.
- There have been few opportunities for parents to contribute their ideas and opinions, or to be consulted, corporately although these are increasing. Questionnaires, to ascertain levels of parental satisfaction, are being used to evaluate events with results fed back through newsletters.

- 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 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

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

- This is an inclusive school. The way in which parents and carers are involved with the school makes it more so. The impressive way the school takes a multi-agency approach to carers and families that need support improves outcomes for a number of students. In some cases, it has contributed to a reduction in the number of students being excluded. The excellent work undertaken with looked after children, their carers and social workers has improved the life chances of many.

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 believe the role played by parents in their children's education is vital. Your philosophy is one of listening to concerns and facilitating good communication. Parents, in turn, say that the school leadership is very responsive to their thoughts and enquiries. 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 raising-attainment plan, which supplements the improvement plan, is less specific on the involvement of parents.
- Governors share your view of the importance of parental involvement, agreeing that more could be done to systematically empower parents as a group in the school's development.
- The school's well-embedded inclusive approach to doing the best for its students and their families is engaging parents and carers well who are traditionally 'hard to reach'. Relationships are good with the Traveller community.
- Parents usually find that any concerns or complaints they wish to raise are dealt with well through informal and other channels.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- embedding and refining some of the more recent systems introduced for improved parental involvement

- finding ways of better using the expertise and time resource within the parental body to support students' learning
- using evaluation of the impact on attainment of student attendance and punctuality, and parental participation in target-setting days, to continue to highlight their importance to parents.

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

Peter Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector