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22 December 2009

Mr C Burnett
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Burnett

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in literacy

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 4 December 2009 to look at work in literacy.

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 included: observations of three lessons; discussions with you and your deputy headteacher; discussions with colleagues responsible for different aspects of literacy; discussions with small groups of students; and an examination of a range of school documentation.

Features of good practice

- Students thrive because you and your colleagues provide an exemplary commitment to raising their aspirations, for example through links with post-16 institutions from an early stage.
- Your assessment procedures are extremely effective. They ensure that throughout the college students are on courses that match their personal abilities and potential. The monitoring of students' attainment is very good and leads to good additional support for those who need it.
- Students develop a strong confidence in their ability to learn effectively. This reflects the success of strategies such as early entry to examinations. It is also an outcome of the high-quality individual support they receive from their subject teachers, a feature of teaching that the students spoken to praised lavishly.
- Students make very good progress in writing. This results from the rigorous work in the English department in developing lengthy explanatory

writing. The 'crossover', as a student described it, between the approaches used in English to improve writing and in other subjects also contributes to their good progress. Students appreciate this consistency of approach and find it helpful.

- The provision of a nurture group setting for vulnerable students helps them make good progress in a safe and supportive environment.
- Thematic days are providing innovative and exciting opportunities for the students to apply their literacy skills in real contexts. For example, students successfully developed their persuasive writing and speaking skills when showing their support for the building of a school in Kenya.

Areas for development

- We discussed the benefits of monitoring and evaluating the impact of the book-box scheme in tutor time and building on its potential for encouraging more students to read voluntarily in their own time.

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

Chris Griffin
Additional Inspector