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Mr Chris Flathers
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Flathers

Ofsted survey inspection programme: leadership of more than one school

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 27 and 28 September 2010 to look at the leadership of the federation.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on the effectiveness of leadership to sustain improvement in all schools in the federation.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to a national report. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributors or contributing institutions but individuals and institutions will not be identified in the main text without your agreement.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included interviews with senior leaders, middle leaders, governors, staff, parents, local authority representatives, learners and the scrutiny of relevant documentation.

The effectiveness of the federation leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement is outstanding.

Context

The Goldstar Federation consists of Goldbeaters Primary School and the Orion Primary School. The schools were federated in September 2004.

Outcomes

- At Key Stage 1, the attainment of pupils over time is average. In Goldbeaters Primary School, results in 2009 improved to be well above

average as a result of a recent drive by the federation to improve teaching. Given pupils' starting point on entry to the schools, this represents good progress.

- Pupils in Key Stage 2 in each school made progress in their learning that was significantly above average. In 2009, the attainment of pupils in Key Stage 2 was above average in both settings. In the Orion Primary School, this level of attainment has been sustained for some years. In Goldbeaters Primary School, as a result of the federation's work on improving teaching, learning and the curriculum, attainment has risen steadily. It improved strongly in 2009 and provisional results from the most recent statutory assessments indicate that this improvement has been maintained.
- Behaviour is good overall and has improved strongly in Goldbeaters Primary School because of early action by the federation to introduce a consistently applied system of rewards and sanctions. However, there has been some decline in attendance partly due to extended absences abroad by some pupils.

Provision

- The quality of teaching in the federation has been strengthened significantly by the use of established systems developed in the Orion School, such as regular monitoring of teaching and the careful coaching of staff. Links between the schools have been effectively used to develop teachers' skills.
- The curriculum in Goldbeaters Primary School has been greatly improved by the adoption of proven strategies for teaching literacy and mathematics developed by its partner school. The mutual sharing of expertise, for example in sports and arts, has enriched each school's curriculum. Parents and pupils in both schools appreciate strongly the extra sporting and cultural opportunities which the federation makes possible.

Leadership and management

- The headteacher has a very clear vision for the federation and provides resolute and very good leadership. He is ably supported by senior leaders and a well-informed governing body. He introduced well-timed measures that improved teaching, leadership and management at Goldbeaters Primary School. The recent, well-planned drive to raise and sustain attainment there has succeeded. The separate identity of each school is carefully developed and the needs of each are accommodated within the federation's planning.
- Key to the gains in attainment has been the headteacher's relentless focus on creating and maintaining an ethos of ambition, inclusion and

improvement whereby staff have the highest expectations for pupils and a 'can do' approach. This ethos pervades both schools at all levels.

- The creation of parallel management structures in each setting enable senior leaders to check well each school's effectiveness. The system of two deputies in each setting means both schools run smoothly while the headteacher divides his time equally between both establishments ensuring the improvement of teaching, learning and attainment.
- Although there was an initial wariness of federation amongst some staff and parents, early successes in improving teaching, communications with parents and the environment at Goldbeaters Primary School overcame these doubts. Pupils, parents and staff appreciate especially the benefits federation brings to community cohesion. A 'pen pal' system and 'friendship days,' whereby pupils regularly visit parallel classes in the partner school, helps them to build friendships with other children in their locality and eases their transition to secondary school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening the federation's strategies for improving attendance.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the leadership of the federation.

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 may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy
Her Majesty's Inspector