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Miss M Gibb
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Gibb

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: the quality and impact of partnership provision in schools for children in service families

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 12 October 2010 to look at the school's contribution to the quality of provision and partnerships for children who are in families of service personnel.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of partnerships, including the quality of the partnerships between schools and agencies and between schools and parents, I looked at how effective the partnerships are in improving children's personal well-being and learning. I also considered the nature of the support given to these children, including those in the most vulnerable circumstances, or those who have a particular special educational need and/or disability, and the arrangements to ensure the continuity of provision when children move in and out of your school.

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: meetings with senior leaders, pupils, parents, a member of support staff responsible for the nurture group and representatives from a range of local authority support services. Telephone discussions were held with the headteacher of the feeder middle school and representatives from behaviour support services and health. A range of documentation was scrutinised including sections of the school's self-evaluation form, analysis of pupils' attainment and progress, policies for supporting pupils and protecting their safety and welfare and a sample of pupils' records.

The school's contribution to the quality of provision and partnerships for children who are in families of service personnel is good.

Key features

- The school provides well for the varying needs of pupils from service families. It reports a general increase in the number of pupils joining with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This has led to a review of the school's provision for these pupils, particularly those who have significant social and emotional needs. The nurture group is a good example of a recent development. This initiative is welcomed by parents and, although relatively new, early signs are that it provides valuable support for the small number of pupils who need extra help in managing their emotions and behaviour.
- Pupils from service families make up around 70% of the school population. Around half of the pupils who attend the school's clubs come from the nearby base. More would like to attend after-school clubs but cannot owing to transport difficulties. Although this barrier has not yet been overcome, you continue to pursue the issue actively, and this is an example of the school's strong commitment to including service pupils as fully as possible in the life of the school.
- The teachers' assessments for pupils who left the school in 2010 confirm the school's own evaluation that standards were below average at Year 4. There is little difference, however, in the standards attained by the pupils who come from service families compared to those who do not. The school's records of attainment and progress identify pupils from service families as a separate group. This is a positive feature. However, the school recognises that some of the school's previous assessments have not always been accurate and this restricts its ability to evaluate the pupils' longer-term progress, including that of pupils from service families.
- The school works successfully with a range of partners and agencies to support service pupils and their families. You and the special educational needs coordinator act quickly when any pupils arrive with an identified need or with a statement of special educational needs. However, the need to re-apply for some of the local authority's support, such as speech and language and mental health services, causes some delay in provision for pupils arriving from other areas who have already benefited from this support in their previous schools. This is further exacerbated when schools do not always send incoming pupils' records promptly. The school's plans that detail the support that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive through the school's own resources contain specific targets and helpful guidance for teachers and support staff. When appropriate, pupils have separate plans for their learning needs, their behaviour and the support from the nurture group. Although they are

regularly reviewed, the comments on the reviews tend to be less specific about the extent to which each target has been successfully met.

- Pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are supported well and the school plays a key role in working with other relevant support agencies to help them keep safe and to support their emotional well-being.
- The school is proactive in developing closer links with families who live on the base. A welcoming reception area has been developed, for example. Parents from the base are positive about the way the school works with them. They particularly appreciate the 'roadshows', instigated by the school, when staff and pupils visit the base's community centre. These allow the parents who may find it difficult to travel to the school to find out more about the school's work and to see their children's achievements.
- The school has a clear procedure for ensuring that any service pupils who transfer to other schools as a result of parents' postings do so with comprehensive records on their attainment and achievement. You and the staff also contact schools promptly when new pupils arrive without prior records. The school's policy is to assess all pupils within two weeks. It is recognised that, in the cases where pupils come with full records that include good information on their prior attainment and academic progress, the requirement to still re-assess these pupils to gain support services may lead to a lack of continuity in the support offered and hence upon pupils' learning.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop the work with children and young people and their parents who are in families of service personnel.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to Service Children's Education.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector