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Ms M Murray
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Murray

Ofsted 2010–11 good practice survey: value for money in schools

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation and that of your staff during my visit to look at how the school achieves good value for money.

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: interviews and discussions with various members of staff and a representative of the governing body; discussions with pupils; visits to lessons; and scrutiny of documentation.

Features of good practice

- A strong sense of core educational values driving all decisions taken by the school, with the pupils' needs and the desired outcomes at the centre.
- The school focuses on developing its own capacity and resources and reducing reliance on external expertise.
- Ensuring that no resources are underdeveloped or underused, including staffing. This was particularly notable in relation to the staff teams and the development of the teaching support staff.
- Careful planning of curriculum initiatives to ensure that they focus on achieving targets in relation to pupils' progress and other outcomes, and which leads to well-considered use of funds.

- Very effective use of partnerships with other schools as a means of obtaining highly effective staff development and identifying opportunities to improve provision. The school calculates the cost of any opportunity and no partnership is entered into unless the school can identify clear benefit for its pupils.
- The school development plan includes a timetable for comprehensive and wide-ranging self-evaluation activities. Pupils' outcomes are tracked carefully and the information is used to evaluate impact.
- The governing body questions all proposals and reports of progress vigorously and expects any expenditure to be linked closely to improvements in pupils' outcomes.
- External benchmarks are used to understand expenditure and assist in achieving high outcomes.
- Extensive use of pupils' views, to help shape the details of developments in provision at the planning stage, and to determine the value and impact of the developments once they are in place. This includes identifying resources and aspects of the accommodation that are underused or are not contributing to good learning, using very creative methods to obtain the most detailed and comprehensive range of views possible.

Areas for development

- We discussed a few details of practice that might be refined, but there were no significant areas for development.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop the school.

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. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector