

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr R Sampson
Headteacher
Chulmleigh Primary School
Beacon Road
Chulmleigh
Devon
EX18 7AA

Mr M Johnson
Headteacher
Chulmleigh Community College
Beacon Road
Chulmleigh
Devon
EX18 7AA

Dear Mr Sampson and Mr Johnson

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: leadership of more than one school

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 9 and 10 November 2010 to look at the leadership of the federation. Please pass on our thanks to the parents and governors that also gave up their time and made a valuable contribution to the visit.

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 included: interviews with senior leaders, middle leaders, governors, staff, parents, local authority representatives and pupils; and the scrutiny of relevant documentation.

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

Context

The Chulmleigh Schools Federation consists of Chulmleigh Primary School and Chulmleigh Community College. The schools were federated in September 2008. Another local primary school will be joining the federation from April 2011.

Outcomes

- A continuous drive to improve the quality of teaching and foster a love of learning sits at the heart of the federation's work and this has an outstanding impact on pupils' academic and personal development.
- Attainment at Key Stage 1 has risen to be significantly above average on all measures. Attainment at Key Stage 2 has remained high, but has also improved with pupils achieving their best ever results in national tests in 2010. The outstanding progress made by pupils in Year 6, relative to their starting points, has placed the school in the top 4% nationally in 2010.
- Attainment at Key Stage 4 is above average and rising and all groups of pupils made at least good progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4.
- Achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved as a result of the excellent work of the federation to ensure continuity of high-quality provision. Joint planning and coordination result in excellent communication and sharing of information. This is used well by all staff to maintain and accelerate progress for these students. Analysis of data shows that all pupils who transfer to the secondary school from within the federation make better progress than those from other schools.
- Pupils report how much they enjoy their school experience. They demonstrate extremely positive attitudes to learning and display a strong sense of community. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem have grown as a result of high-quality transition arrangements and excellent opportunities to work with, and alongside, a range of different staff and pupils. It is a real strength of the federation's work.

Provision

- The high quality of teaching in the federation has been enhanced by the collaborative work undertaken to improve the quality of pupils' learning. Regular sharing of expertise and joint staff training sessions have enabled the construction of a federation teaching and learning policy. The accompanying professional dialogue has given teachers the confidence to engage in cross-phase learning activities and is being used very effectively to develop teachers' skills.
- The mutual sharing of expertise, for example in the arts, mathematics, science, French and design and technology has enriched the quality of the curriculum across the federation. As a result, teachers in each phase are adjusting their classroom practice and programmes of study so that they are specifically tailored to best meet the needs of individual pupils.
- Parents and pupils in both schools greatly appreciate the cross-phase sporting and cultural opportunities that the federation makes possible.

Leadership and management

- Federation leadership is outstanding. You have fostered a strong sense of common purpose among pupils, staff and parents. There is clear evidence of outstanding commitment to realising the ambitious vision and successful development of the federation as a hub of excellence to support learning within the wider local learning community.
- Key to the gains in achievement has been the federation's relentless focus on creating and maintaining an ethos of aspiration and ambition. Action planning is extensive and incisive and results in well-focused plans that promote a culture of continuous improvement through the development of classroom practice. This work is underpinned by an inclusive approach to learning where all are able to succeed.
- The governing body has been instrumental in the federation's development. It has stepped beyond a single school model confidently and embraced fully the notion of wider federation. The quality of succession planning and their ability to see the strategic picture of education in the local learning community is complemented by their attentive management to meeting the differing needs of each school.
- The local authority has provided excellent support to enable well-informed decisions about the process of federation and its future expansion. The federation has been extremely successful in sharing its expertise in business management and economic sustainability to support other schools within the local community.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- embedding and developing further the successful strategies for driving up the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in the light of new schools joining the federation from April 2011.

I hope that 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 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

Karl Sampson
Her Majesty's Inspector