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Mrs C Jackson
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jackson

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 19 and 20 January 2011 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 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 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 good.

Outcomes

- The federation has brought a greater stability to St Edward's RC Primary School and the drive to improve the quality of teaching and develop effective learning habits has had a good impact on pupils' academic and personal development.
- In the first year of the federation, attainment at Key Stage 2 dropped for pupils in St Edward's RC Primary School. However, the federation's assessment information demonstrates secure gains in pupils' progress and levels of attainment which are improving strongly. In the same period in St

Peter's RC Primary School, above average levels of attainment were maintained and achievement remains good overall because pupils continue to make good progress in their learning. Nonetheless, results in writing at Key Stage 1 are weaker than those in other subjects in both schools.

- The impact of the federation's work to secure new buildings, classrooms and refurbish St Edward's RC Primary School has played an important role in securing improved pupil attitudes to learning in this school.
- Pupils behave well and report how much they enjoy their school experience. They particularly appreciate the increasing number of exciting opportunities to learn together since the federation began.
- Pupils' attendance is now high in St Peter's RC Primary School and is improving in St Edward's RC Primary School as a result of shared procedures and consistently applied systems across the federation.

Provision

- The quality of teaching across the federation has risen as a result of its leaders' clear focus on improving teaching. A combination of coaching, training, joint planning and paired observation underpinned by a much more rigorous programme of federation monitoring has been used successfully to bring this about. Consequently, teachers' skills are developing well, although federation leaders recognise that this has yet to impact fully across all teachers' practice.
- The mutual sharing of expertise, for example in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 2 and in the development of writing has enriched the quality of the curriculum across the federation. Joint planning and sharing of information are used well so that learning can be specifically tailored to best meet the needs of individual pupils and accelerate their progress.
- Parents and pupils in both schools greatly appreciate the cross-school cultural opportunities, learning outside of the classroom, curriculum visits and the developing creative curriculum that the federation makes possible. It is a developing strength.

Leadership and management

- You provide effective leadership and clear direction to the federation. The system of one head of school in each setting ensures that both schools run smoothly. It enables you to divide your time equally between both schools so that the improvement of teaching, learning and attainment is implemented effectively. Federation leaders incorporate challenging performance targets within discrete plans which focus well on meeting the differing needs of each school.
- The creation of parallel management structures in each setting enables senior and middle leaders to jointly monitor and evaluate progress across the federation. As a result, all leaders have a greater understanding of current performance and use this effectively to identify areas for

improvement. For example, the federation has rightly prioritised improving writing as well as developing teaching so that pupils have a greater understanding of how they can learn more effectively.

- The formation of the federation has enhanced the provision of continual professional development for all staff. Good practice is now shared regularly and key policies to improve learning have been developed jointly which are contributing to the gains in pupils' progress.
- An experienced governing body provides good support and staff demonstrate a clear commitment to raising achievement for all. The school networks and resources offered by the local authority and neighbouring schools are used effectively.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment at St Edward's RC Primary School so that pupils in both schools attain equally well
- strengthening the federation's strategies to secure further improvements in the quality of pupils' writing and in the coherent and consistent development of pupils' learning skills.

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