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Dear Mr Bayford

### **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 my thanks to the pupils, staff, parents, the local authority representatives and governors that 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, governors, parents, pupils and local authority representatives; observations of the school in action; and the scrutiny of relevant documentation.

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

### **Context**

The federation between West Minster Primary and Rose Street Primary has been in operation since May 2006. It is known as the Sheerness West Federation. A significant building project is currently underway at Rose Street Primary.

### **Outcomes**

- The reason why federation leadership is judged good overall is because in the last year it has strengthened considerably, resulting in some important

improvements to provision and outcomes in both schools. For example, in May 2009, West Minster Primary School was given a notice to improve; in June 2010 after a period of rapid improvement the school was judged to be satisfactory overall. While standards are rising more strongly and progress is accelerating, the federation has yet to demonstrate that improvements to achievement in both schools can be sustained over time.

- Pupils in both schools make increasingly positive progress as they develop sound learning attitudes. Assessment information indicates increasing rates of progress across the federation, particularly in foundation subjects, but also in mathematics and English. Challenging targets are being used effectively. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are on track to achieve considerably higher levels than in the past. The federation recognises that some groups, in particular the gifted and talented pupils, do not yet make the progress that they could.
- The majority of children enter the federation schools with skill development that is well below expectations, particularly their speaking and listening skills. They are now making good progress so that by the end of Key Stage 2 the gap has narrowed between the development of their language skills and national expectations. However, more needs to be done to ensure that pupils' language skills improve further so that they are better prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Behaviour is very positive and pupils enjoy the friendly and supportive ethos that is consistent across the federation. Pupils are polite, friendly and eager to talk about how much they enjoy challenging learning opportunities as a result of the teachers making learning such fun.

## **Provision**

- The increased consistency and quality of teaching across the federation has brought about improvements to achievement. Some teaching in lessons is outstanding. For example, some teachers know pupils extremely well both personally and academically. This results in excellent relationships in the classroom based on mutual respect and an extremely cooperative working ethos. Increasingly accurate assessment data are also contributing to the ongoing process of raising expectations for all pupils. A range of outstanding practice was observed including effective small group work which was developing pupils' independence and teamwork skills very effectively.
- The curriculum has improved in both schools as teachers are able to plan more effectively with greater support from colleagues. Specialist teachers in physical education, music and religious education teach across the federation enhancing the opportunities for all pupils.
- The quality of care, guidance and support has improved in both schools. The heads of school, in partnership with partner agencies, have established much stronger relationships with parents resulting in an ethos that values education in the community.

## **Leadership and management**

- You lead the federation well with the senior teams from each school. This is demonstrated by the high morale among staff and extremely happy pupils. The senior team and other staff are successfully improving teaching and learning across the federation as a result of thorough procedures to check the quality of lessons. Leaders are clear about how they can continue this work with plans to increase the impact still further, for example, by developing staff coaching.
- Governors demonstrate a clear understanding of the federation's responsibilities and how they can increase further their impact on the school improvement process. Common policies in both schools help to ensure greater consistency particularly when working with other partners.
- The leaders have established a high level of trust with parents and carers, through very effective communication and the strong trend of improvement across the federation.
- The local authority has given effective support to the federation with adviser time and brokering opportunities between the schools explaining the benefits and issues concerning federation.
- There are strong and effective links with the children's centre.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed include:**

- raising attainment further by:
  - planning lessons that are more challenging for able, gifted and talented pupils
  - sharing the outstanding practice that exists within the federation
  - improving provision for the development of language skills so that pupils are better prepared for the next stage in their education.

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 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

**Paul Scott**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**