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Dear Dr Rolph

### **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 students, during my visit on 9 and 10 February 2011 to look at the leadership of the federation. Please pass on my thanks to the parents and governors who 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 nominated staff, a group of governors, two groups of parents and two groups of students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; a learning walk in each school; and a meeting with the schools' former school improvement partner.

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

### **Context**

The Monks' Dyke and Tennyson Learning Federation consists of Monks' Dyke Technology College and Tennyson High School. The schools were federated in February 2010 and are separated by a distance of 15 miles. Before federation, both schools worked together in a learning partnership. The schools operate within a selective educational system which means that they admit fewer more able students than is the case found in most schools.

## **Outcomes**

- In the first year of the federation, results at GCSE level in the key measure of five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics improved strongly in Monks' Dyke Technology College and were just above average. Results at Tennyson High School were lower, having dipped in 2010 as a result of some weaknesses in the cohort of students. Nonetheless, students at this school made good progress in their learning. Contributing to these results was a federation-wide initiative to provide additional support to students in Year 11 who were underachieving. Assessment data indicate that results are due to rise in Tennyson High School, partly as a result of improvements in teaching and in provision. Since federation, the progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Tennyson High School has improved as leadership of this area of work has been strengthened and resources used more effectively.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning in both settings observed were good. The federation's rewards and sanctions policy has been extended to Tennyson High School and its consistent application has improved behaviour.
- Students' attendance has improved at Monks' Dyke Technology College and is now average. Attendance is lower at its partner school but is rising as a result of the relentless drive to improve it. However, persistent absenteeism at this school remains high.

## **Provision**

- The quality of teaching across the federation has been strengthened. In one school, weaknesses in teaching have been robustly tackled and there has been a strong and sustained focus on improving teachers' planning, behaviour management and learning outcomes.
- Each school has drawn successfully on the expertise of its partner school to strengthen its curriculum. For example, science at GCSE level has been introduced at Tennyson High School to meet the needs of more able students. Its expertise has been used well to develop vocational qualifications at Monks' Dyke Technology College. Liaison with the partner school has enabled Tennyson High School to expand extra-curricular opportunities for students, such as educational visits abroad. Some joint extra-curricular activities have been well used as incentives to encourage students in their learning.
- Guidance and support for students have been strengthened in each setting by adopting initiatives developed in the other school. Monks' Dyke Technology College has adopted the partner school's monitoring procedures for Maths and English. Other effective data analysis procedures were taken from Monks' Dyke Technology College to Tennyson High School. These have produced a more accurate picture of where underachievement lies and enabled support for Year 11 students to be better targeted. They have also been well used to provide students and

their parents with more information about their academic progress. Pastoral support for students has been strengthened at Tennyson High School by introducing a vertical tutorial system. This has been welcomed by students and has improved behaviour and transition arrangements for new learners.

### **Leadership and management**

- Both schools have benefited from the well-managed introduction of improvement strategies that have been successfully used by the partner school. The senior leadership team's high expectations, coupled with common monitoring procedures, have also raised the accountability of staff in the federation. In one school, roles and responsibilities of staff have been made much clearer and additional adults more effectively deployed to support students.
- Development plans are focused on raising attainment and take account of the schools' individual needs. Key data are monitored carefully on a federation basis and reviewed regularly by leaders and governors.
- Leaders and governors have fostered a high level of professional dialogue between federation staff enabling them to draw frequently on the expertise of colleagues in the parallel setting. They have arranged for several staff to share expertise and resources by working across both schools. There is scope to extend opportunities for other staff to work alongside colleagues in the partner school.
- The senior leadership team and governors quickly overcame some initial wariness of parents and staff about federation by being open and approachable. Stakeholders are well informed and consulted about developments in the federation.

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

- raising attainment at Tennyson High School so that all students in the federation attain equally well
- reducing persistent absence at Tennyson High School
- extending opportunities for staff to work alongside colleagues in the partner school

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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Michael McIlroy**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**