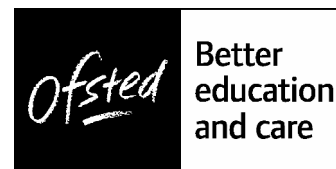


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05 December 2006

Mrs Bennett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bennett

Ofsted survey programme: evaluation of Reforming and Developing the Workforce

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit to Holbrook on Thursday 30 November 2006 to evaluate the impact of reforming and developing the workforce.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with a governor, staff and pupils, scrutiny of documentation, a tour of the school and an observation of the reception class.

The overall effectiveness of reforming and developing the workforce in your school was judged to be outstanding.

Impact on standards and the outcomes of Every Child Matters

The impact of workforce reform on achievement and standards is outstanding.

- When they join the school many pupils have very low attainment, particularly in English language. Between starting school and Year 6, the rate at which they progress has improved in the last few years and, in 2006, the results in the Key Stage 2 tests in English, mathematics and science were in line with the national averages. This improvement is due, in large part, to the outstanding impact of workforce reform. The close working relationship between teachers and teaching assistants ensures

that pupils receive the support they need to achieve well during their time at the school.

- Staff give high priority to pupils' personal and social development. As a result, the children are happy, secure and keen to achieve. They know what they need to do to keep themselves healthy and safe, and behaviour seen during the visit was very good. In the reception class pupils collaborated very well and showed the confidence to work by themselves.

Impact on the quality of teaching and learning

The impact of the strategy on the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- Since its introduction in 2002, the provision of planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time has contributed to an improvement in the quality of teaching. Effective use is made of this time to identify pupils' individual needs and plan teaching programmes to meet these.
- The high quality of the teaching assistance is a significant contributory factor to the very good progress pupils make. Teaching assistants possess a wide range of expertise, for example, in special educational needs, English as an additional language and in the community languages spoken by many of the children.
- The deployment, where possible, of new members of staff to work with other more experienced colleagues aids their induction and promotes continuity and consistency across classes and years. It also reinforces the school's expectations of the working relationship between teachers and teaching assistants.

Impact on the quality of curriculum

The impact of the strategy on specific areas of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The time provided each week for teachers and teaching assistants to meet together contributes to the high quality of the planning and ensures that teaching assistants know precisely what is expected of them in lessons. These meetings also provide an effective forum for the sharing of information on pupils' individual needs and, through the exchange of views and expertise, foster creativity in the identification of learning activities.
- The school offers a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, many involving contributions from outside agencies and the local community.
- The school is highly committed to forging close links with parents and encourages them to take an active part in school life. Regular meetings, attended by bilingual teaching assistants, help parents to understand the work of the school and how they can contribute to their child's learning at home.

Leadership and management of reforming and developing the workforce

The leadership and management of the strategy are outstanding.

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school which is well focused on raising standards and improving the children's learning. She has a very good understanding of the potential of workforce reform for achieving this. With the assistance of the deputy headteacher, she has successfully led workforce remodelling and many changes, including the provision of PPA time, pre-date the national initiative.
- Accountability at all levels is well defined and contributes to the sharpness of the school's focus on improving the children's learning.
- The school has monitored and evaluated well the impact of its remodelling actions on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The self-evaluation prepared in advance of the visit is well focused, thorough, and accurate.

Impact on training and managing a reformed workforce

- The school provides an inclusive environment for its staff and pupils and manages its diverse workforce and links with external agencies very well. All roles are well defined with clear lines of accountability and reporting. Communication at all levels is very good; in particular, the scheduling of meetings ensures that members of the wider workforce have regular contact with senior leaders. This contributes to the high level of job satisfaction and personal fulfilment expressed by staff during the visit.
- The school gives due recognition within its pay and conditions of service to the need for teaching assistants to meet with the teachers with whom they work closely and to participate in whole school training. This contributes to their involvement in school life and is a clear expression of the value the school places on their work.
- The school gives very high priority to the professional training and development of its workforce. This enables staff, particularly the teaching assistants, to take on roles of responsibility they had not previously considered possible and, in some cases, to continue their studies to degree level. It is a testimony to the school's approach to professional development that so many teaching assistants have been or are in the process of being assessed as Higher Level Teaching Assistants and that some have gained qualified teacher status.

Impact on inclusion

The impact of the strategy on provision for inclusion is outstanding.

- The school is highly focused on meeting children's individual needs and the diversity of its workforce enables it to do so very effectively. The range of needs presented by the children is very broad. To meet these, the school

draws on the considerable expertise of its own staff and that of outside agencies.

- The appointment of Learning Mentors, funded as part of the 'Excellence in Cities' initiative, has had a positive impact on both staff and pupils. Senior leaders, class teachers and teaching assistants now spend considerably less time dealing with attendance or behaviour problems and the learning mentors are able to provide individual support for disaffected pupils and their families.

Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include the need to:

- encourage members of the wider workforce to maintain a record of their continuing professional development and incorporate this within the school's new performance management arrangements
- make explicit the school's policy and procedures for the induction of members of the wider workforce
- share the successful professional development of the teaching assistants with pupils to further raise their aspirations and increase their knowledge of future career paths.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to reform and develop the school workforce.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Rhona Seviour
Her Majesty's Inspector