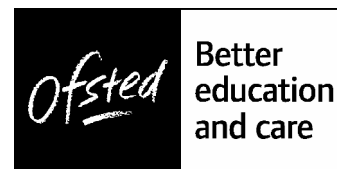


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



30 November 2006

Dr G Nelmes
Headteacher
Priestnall School
Heaton Mersey
Stockport
Cheshire
SK4 3HP

Dear Dr Nelmes

Ofsted survey programme: evaluation of Reforming and Developing the Workforce

Thank you for the hospitality and co-operation I received from you and your staff, during my visit on 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 staff and pupils and scrutiny of documentation.

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

Impact on standards and the outcomes of Every Child Matters

The impact of the strategy to reform and develop the school workforce on standards and the outcomes of Every Child Matters is good.

- Standards in the school are very good and have been improving over time. The remodelling agenda has contributed to the high standards by improving the quality of, and focus upon, the teaching and learning process.
- The focus upon attendance by the attendance officer and pastoral managers has contributed to pupil attendance that is above the national average.

- The school provides effective support to ensure the enjoyment and achievement of all pupils and a safe environment that aims to retain them in full time education and improve their opportunities for achieving economic well-being. The work of the Renaissance Centre in supporting vulnerable pupils with special emotional and social needs and the Study Centre in supporting pupils with problem behaviour contribute significantly to this. The removal of pupils to these centres also allows other pupils to enjoy their lessons and to make better progress because the likelihood of disruption is reduced.
- The student counsellor effectively supports pupils' emotional health and a variety of outside agencies provide additional guidance and support for students.

Impact on the quality of teaching and learning

The impact of the strategy to reform and develop the school workforce on the quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time ensures that teachers now have more time to effectively plan their teaching.
- The work of faculty assistants allows teachers to be freed up to focus more effectively on teaching and learning. By covering for absent colleagues, they provide more continuity for pupils and a more consistent approach to behaviour management, which makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Faculty assistants also support teachers in lessons and, in particular, they provide opportunities for teachers to introduce more differentiated support for pupils.
- In the Renaissance and Study Centres, individualised learning programmes are devised to meet the needs of each pupil.

Impact on the quality of curriculum

The impact of the strategy to reform and develop the workforce on the quality of the curriculum is good.

- Remodelling actions have allowed the school and its faculties to focus keenly on ensuring the most appropriate curriculum choices are made for pupils and in the regular review of the curriculum provision. In mathematics, for example, a new GCSE specification was introduced this year. Understanding and planning for this and the preparation of new schemes of work could not have been done as effectively without the use of the gained time available in the summer.

Leadership and management of reforming and developing the school workforce

The quality of leadership and management in relation to reforming and developing the school workforce is good.

- The school is firmly committed to the remodelling agenda, which is clearly embedded in its strategic plans.
- It has met all of the statutory requirements and has introduced non-teaching roles and responsibilities, such as pastoral managers and faculty assistants, into areas where it feels the skills and accessibility of staff can make a major contribution to the quality of education and support available to pupils.
- The school is actively evaluating the contribution of these new roles to the quality of education it provides. There is however, no formal evaluation of the impact of other remodelling actions, such as PPA time, on teaching and learning and on outcomes for pupils.
- The support provided by faculty assistants enables heads of faculty to focus much more effectively on planning and leading the teaching and learning in their faculties and giving more time to strategic and quality issues.

Impact on training and developing a reformed school workforce

The quality of training and development in relation to reforming and developing the school workforce is satisfactory.

- All staff, whether teaching or non teaching, are included in whole school in-service training sessions and faculty assistants join in fully with all faculty-based training.
- The school supports the training needs of all of its staff but to date, for support staff, this has been on an ad hoc basis, with individuals identifying their own training needs. The process of performance management that is about to be introduced for non-teaching staff is expected to identify training needs in the future.
- Communication about expectations and training and development opportunities for non-teaching staff are not always clear and this is a potential source of dissatisfaction.
- Job satisfaction among non-teaching staff following remodelling has improved as a result of more interesting jobs and the value which the school puts on the skills and contribution they make to the quality of education provided for pupils.

Impact on inclusion

The impact of the strategy to reform and develop the school workforce on inclusion is good.

- The Study Centre and Renaissance Centre work to keep pupils in full time education and to provide them with individualised learning programmes when it is felt appropriate that they should be removed from mainstream classes.

- Liaison between the centre managers and non teaching pastoral managers ensures that all pupils with problems are dealt with more quickly and more effectively and that issues are not allowed to escalate.

Areas for improvement

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

- consider how to evaluate the impact of remodelling actions, such as PPA time, on teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils
- assess the impact of the new performance management system for non teaching staff to ensure that it meets the needs of staff and the school effectively
- provide more explicit communication about expectations and training and development opportunities for non teaching roles.

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

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector