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Mr J Bach
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Dear Mr Bach

Ofsted survey programme: evaluation of Reforming and Developing the Workforce

Thank you for the hospitality and co-operation we received from you and your staff, during our visit on 04 - 05 December 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of documentation, visits to the Learning Support Unit and the Centre and observation of parts of lessons.

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

Impact on standards and the outcomes of Every Child Matters

The strategy to reform and develop the school workforce has had limited impact on standards and the outcomes of Every Child Matters.

- Standards and achievement of students in relation to their prior attainment is below average at Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards in the school are beginning to improve.
- The school focus on improving the behaviour and attendance of disaffected and vulnerable pupils has resulted in a reduction in the fixed term and permanent exclusion rates. The outstanding support provided by members of the wider workforce in the Learning Support Unit 'W4', the Centre and the Youth Centre contributes significantly to

raising the achievement of individual students and promoting a positive attitude to learning.

- The alternative curriculum for targeted Year 11 students helps to retain them in full-time education and improve their opportunities for achieving economic well-being.

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 limited.

- The provision of planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time for teachers, in addition to time gained from the employment of external invigilators, and the support of an expanded administrative staff and additional teaching assistants is not focused explicitly on improving teaching and learning throughout the school.
- The school has met the statutory requirements for limiting teacher cover without thoroughly reviewing the procedures or the impact on student learning.
- The Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HTLAs) are effectively deployed as form tutors and in teaching targeted groups.
- The very effective intensive support provided in the Learning Support Unit allows students to re-engage in learning and set appropriate targets for reintegration into mainstream classes. However, despite transitional support, the positive attitudes and skills gained by the students are not always transferred effectively.
- The Learning Mentors and the Youth Workers deliver high quality support for students on individualised learning programmes.
- The school uses a wealth of data on students' prior attainment, target setting, behavioural measures and attitudes to learning. Although the data is combined effectively by members of the wider workforce and teaching staff to target students who would benefit from intervention strategies it is underdeveloped in other areas of the school to focus on overall achievement.

Impact on the quality of curriculum

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

- There have been regular reviews of curriculum provision but there has been slow progress in ensuring that the most appropriate curriculum is in place to improve achievement across all Key Stages and for all groups of students. The skills and expertise of the wider workforce have been utilised well in the Work and College Pathway.

Leadership and management of reforming and developing the school workforce

Progress in planning for and implementing the strategy has been limited. There have been considerable changes to the senior leadership team during the past two years with three members newly in post. There have also been difficulties with staff recruitment and retention, notably in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).

- The school has met most of the statutory requirements of the national workload agreement but the principles underlying the strategy are not clearly embedded in its development planning.
- The recent appointment of a director of operations to the senior leadership team is a positive development to improve the strategic leadership of the school and to support the leadership and management roles of the senior managers.
- The members of the wider workforce deployed to support vulnerable, disaffected students and those with learning difficulties have developed effective leadership and management roles within their areas of expertise.
- The school has not fully realised the potential of the strategy to raise standards and achievement and has not monitored or evaluated the contribution of the wider workforce to teaching and learning.

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 members of the wider workforce, are included in whole school in-service training sessions.
- The school supports the training needs and implements performance management procedures for all staff.
- Job satisfaction among the wider workforce is high. Suitable induction and training opportunities are provided in line with identified needs and career development.

Impact on inclusion

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

- W4, the Centre and Youth Centre support the inclusion of students in full-time education and provide them with individualised learning programmes to improve their behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

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

- consider how to embed the principles of reforming and developing the workforce into school improvement planning, ensuring that all aspects are explicitly linked to raising achievement across the school
- consider how time for PPA and gained time can be used to focus specifically on improving teaching and learning
- monitor and evaluate the impact of the wider workforce on student achievement, to consolidate and extend the effective work that is being done with targeted groups of students
- consider how to combine and analyse the range of student data into a format that can be used effectively by staff and students to raise achievement of all students.

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

Anne Wellham
Her Majesty's Inspector