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Mrs P Orme
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Orme

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Reforming and Developing the School Workforce

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 September 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 and scrutiny of documentation.

The overall effectiveness of work to reforming and developing the school workforce in your school was judged to be good. However, a number of aspects of the reforms were in place prior to the legislation and, over time, their impact has been outstanding.

Impact on standards and the outcomes of Every Child Matters (ECM)

Achievement and standards are good. The school is very focused on maximising pupils' progress. The impact on the five ECM outcomes is good, particularly enjoying and achieving and staying safe; for example, the work of teaching assistants in supporting the emotional needs of pupils has made the school a safer environment for some of the more vulnerable pupils. The use of administrative time to follow up absences, while having a limited impact overall, has improved the attendance of some individuals.

Impact on the quality of teaching and learning

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

Teachers have had 10% release time for many years. They continue to use their planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time to good effect for a range of professional purposes. As staff from the same year groups can not be released simultaneously, the teachers agree to plan as a team after school, using PPA time for assessment and leadership and management purposes.

The teachers employed to provide PPA time are very well included in the school; their attendance in year group meetings ensures good continuity for the pupils and their involvement in the performance management system ensures robust quality assurance.

Impact on the quality of curriculum

The curriculum has changed little due to the strategy. Over time, teachers have planned more closely with teaching assistants and the curriculum is matched more closely to the needs of the pupils. A reasonable range of extra-curricular activities take place throughout the year, two sports clubs being run by outside providers.

The leadership and management of reforming and developing the workforce

Leadership and management of the strategy are good.

The school leadership is committed to the principles of the remodelling agenda and has a very clear understanding of how it can have a positive impact on the staff's workload and in raising standards. All phases of the reforms are securely in place, with appropriate adaptations to meet the needs of the school. Changes are monitored and evaluated, with action taken as necessary; for example, inconsistent quality led to the sessions run by the local football club being discontinued.

Although major reforms, such as PPA time, were in place, the school set up a change team to ensure all groups contributed to further improvements. Well led by the bursar, the team made small, yet significant improvements to the administrative arrangements, enabling staff to further concentrate on the important aspects of their work; for example, rationalising the collection of dinner money and improving the system for ordering resources. The team has not met for some time, and could still have a useful role in monitoring and evaluating improvements.

The headteacher is very aware of issues surrounding the financial sustainability of staffing issues whilst managing falling roles; for example, to balance the demand on teaching assistants to deliver specialist programmes to individual and small groups of pupils while maintaining full-time whole class support.

Impact on training and managing a reformed workforce

The management of the workforce is good. Morale is high, with staff enjoying and feeling valued in their roles. Clear performance management systems ensure all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. As the teaching role of support assistants continues to develop, it will be important that sufficient time is available for their administrative tasks.

The introduction of the bursar has been very well managed, enabling her to build up her range of responsibilities very effectively, including being part of the senior management team. Her line management of caretaking and lunchtime staff and awareness of the day to day running of the school has enabled the headteacher to extend her strategic role.

Impact on inclusion

The impact of the strategy on provision for inclusion is good. There is a strong commitment to develop an inclusive school. Particularly good consideration is given to deployment of teaching assistants to support the most vulnerable children. The work of assistants with individual pupils is permeating and positively influencing practice across the school.

The headteacher is fully aware of the need to plan for the development of specialised roles; for example, two more support assistants are to be trained to support and deliver programmes to pupils with emotional and behavioural needs.

Areas for improvement

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

- monitor the hours worked by teaching assistants, focusing on the balance between direct contact and administrative time
- redefine the school change team's purpose; for example to focus more on monitoring and evaluating the impact of changes on specific groups.

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

Andrew Olive
Her Majesty's Inspector