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Mr M Pike
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Dear Mr Pike

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 Hastings High on Tuesday 30 January, 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, and observation of a lesson.

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 workforce reform on achievement and standards is good.

- Results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above average. English results, a key issue in the last school inspection in 2004, have improved. Pupils' good progress is due in part to the effective support they receive from teaching/learning support assistants in lessons.
- The work of the data manager is enabling the school to monitor pupils' progress more closely and to identify and respond quickly to any underachievement.

- Members of the wider workforce contribute effectively to the school's ability to meet the five outcomes of Every Child Matters, for example by responding to their pastoral needs and providing assistance and encouragement in lessons.
- Pupils seen during the visit were positive about the school, perceptive about its strengths and constructive when indicating areas for improvement. They show a readiness to contribute to school life, particularly through such activities as the SPLAT (Supporting Pupils by Listening and Talking) initiative to offer support and advice to other pupils.

Impact on the quality of teaching and learning

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

- The work of the wider workforce, including the data manager, reprographics staff and teaching/learning support assistants, has reduced the administrative load on teachers and this, together with the provision of planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and the employment of a cover supervisor, is enabling teachers to give increased attention to the planning and content of lessons and to tracking pupils' progress.
- In the Year 9 lesson observed pupils were attentive, responsive and well behaved. The teacher's effective use of the interactive whiteboard captured their attention from the beginning and throughout the lesson pupils were actively and enthusiastically involved, constantly questioning the teacher as well as helping each other. The potential of the learning support assistant to contribute actively to the lesson was not realised.

Impact on the quality of curriculum

The impact of the strategy on aspects of the English curriculum is good.

- The skills and expertise of a senior teaching assistant has enabled the school to increase the number of teaching groups in English and this has had a beneficial impact on standards. Staff have made good use of the national strategy and intervention materials as the basis of the teaching for the additional English class.

Leadership and management of reforming and developing the workforce

The leadership and management of the strategy are good.

- Senior leaders have a good understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of workforce reform and promote an inclusive ethos which recognises the benefits of a diverse staff.

- The recent appointment of two teaching assistants to a head of year post, which was open to all staff, is a very good indication of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity and of the willingness of senior leaders to try out new ways of working.
- The school, aided by the change team, has made very good progress in implementing the workload agreement. However, there has not yet been any formal evaluation of the impact of the changes. The link between remodelling and standards is not explicit in development planning or well understood by all staff.
- Leadership and management time is allocated to teachers but the school's expectations for the use of this, and PPA time, are not sufficiently explicit.

Impact on training and managing a reformed workforce

- The school is supportive of the training and development of the wider workforce. The distinctive skills and experience of individuals are recognised and career development encouraged. This has enabled members of the wider workforce, including the data manager, the joint heads of year and the senior teaching assistants, to take on roles of responsibility and extend their contribution to the work of the school.
- There are clear and well-understood line management arrangements for members of the wider workforce. Although managers are supportive of those they manage, there is no whole school approach to the appraisal or performance management of the wider workforce.
- The attendance of the data manager and teaching/learning support assistants at local networking meetings involving other schools provides a very good opportunity for them to share experiences and expertise and to learn from others.

Impact on inclusion

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

- The post of data manager is enabling the school to monitor achievement more closely by providing teachers with the level of data analysis they need to identify, for example, pupils who are failing to make the expected progress and those who may be in need of additional support.
- Very good consideration is given to the deployment of teaching/learning support assistants to support pupils with special educational needs. Regular, timetabled meetings of these assistants with the special educational needs co-ordinator provide a valuable forum for discussing pupils' progress and the impact of the support they are receiving.

Areas for improvement

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

- provide more explicit expectations about the use of PPA and leadership and management time
- provide opportunities for teachers and teaching/learning support assistants to review and develop their work together and, in particular, to share practice in relation to the management and deployment of support staff within lessons
- introduce a consistent approach to the performance management of the wider workforce
- evaluate the impact of remodelling actions, such as PPA time and the cover supervision arrangements, on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning.

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