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Mr Bruce Goddard
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Dear Mr Goddard

Ofsted survey inspection programme: Reforming and Developing the School Workforce

Thank you for your co-operation and hospitality, and that of the staff, during my visit to Highlands School on 27 November and 01 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, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Standards are just in line with average in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, where the school's first cohort of students is following the International Baccalaureate (I.B.) Diploma, standards are satisfactory. Results in Key Stage 3 tests have remained broadly the same overall in 2006 as those in 2005 but with some improvement in English. They have improved slightly over the same period in Key Stage 4 examinations. The

improvements have been supported in part by the good support for pupils and teachers from teaching and learning support assistants and a range of other adults working in most areas of the school.

- Outcomes of recent surveys show that most pupils are now happy in the school. They feel safe, especially with the installation of the school's CCTV system from the start of term, and well supported by teachers and the wider workforce.
- A number of curriculum areas encourage healthy life styles. Individual pupils who have particular reasons for improving their diet and fitness are given discrete support in doing so by the wider workforce staff. Pupils are very aware and knowledgeable about the importance of diet. This has encouraged the school council to begin negotiations to improve the quality of school meals provided by the external caterer.
- Relationships between teachers and the wider workforce and pupils are strong and mutually respectful, enhancing provision and pupils' well-being.
- Behaviour is now very good. Pupils and staff note significant improvement both in pupil conduct and the quality of the school environment that encourages it in recent months. This change follows the introduction of a clear set of expectations and associated rules to underpin good learning. Greatly supported by the work of the school's two behaviour mentors and heads of house, pupils show consideration and respect for each other, adults in the school and the wider community.

Impact on the quality of teaching and learning

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

- Teachers are given suitable time to plan, prepare for and assess (PPA) pupils' learning. Cover for this time is provided by qualified teaching staff, whilst cover for teacher illness or for attendance at necessary training courses is provided by trained cover supervisors. Most teachers use PPA time well to enhance their teaching and provide regular feedback to pupils. This is supported by the school's use of ICT which enables teachers to share plans for lessons with other staff, including the wider workforce.
- Within lessons, learning support assistants encourage and help motivate individual pupils with whom they are working well. In some faculties, teaching assistants also provide specialist support to the lesson to improve learning overall.
- In a number of faculties specialist technicians make a significant contribution to the planning and preparation of lessons. The performing arts technician, for example, brings considerable experience from the film industry, contributing not only to the development of resources but also playing a key role in supporting learning within lessons, to the benefit of pupils and teachers' alike.

- Cover supervisors organise lessons well so as to implement the plan set by the class teacher. They are helped in doing so by the school's IT systems that enable them to register pupil attendance linked to the school's central attendance system, receive lesson plans and individual pupil requirements via email, use interactive whiteboards where appropriate and call on other staff supported where necessary. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but on occasions where the work set by the class teacher is insufficiently demanding or not followed-up speedily enough, pupils become disenchanted and de-motivated in their learning, creating unnecessary challenges for the cover supervisor.
- Outside lessons or in withdrawal groups, behaviour mentors enhance the quality of learning by providing focussed support for individuals and groups of pupils, to enable them to take greater responsibility for their learning.

Impact on the quality of the curriculum

The impact of the strategy on the quality of the curriculum is good.

- Teachers' skills and expertise match the subject needs of the curriculum well. In addition, the school has employed an excellent range of specialists to enhance achievement overall. This includes learning support and teaching assistants, technicians who support within each faculty, two behaviour mentors, a school counsellor, and a school matron. To support learning outside school and links with the wider community, the school also engages a work-related learning/aim higher co-ordinator and works closely with a safer school co-ordinator from the metropolitan police who is based within the school for four days per week.
- As a result of the contribution of the wider workforce, the school has noted that many students with significant individual needs have been able to achieve in ways that would not have been possible without them. Behaviour mentors, for example, contribute in designing behaviour management programmes for pupils to follow, provide 'time-out' support to allow pupils to study in other than their regular classrooms and assist heads of houses in addressing particular behavioural issues. They also contribute to the curriculum as a whole, for example in supporting the assembly programme during Black History month in a way which engages pupils from a range of minority ethnic groups.
- In some faculties, the work of the teaching assistants shows a clear impact on pupil learning and staff development. For example, in performing arts the range and quality of GCSE provision and BTEC courses offered as an alternative to IB in the sixth form are predicated in part on the expertise of the technician.

- Outside the subject curriculum, there has been very favourable feedback from pupils concerning the organisation of work experience, that contributes to enterprise education across the curriculum. As a result of enterprise activities that have raised economic and community awareness, a team has recently taken second place in the London final during enterprise week.
- Pupils of all ages take part in activities outside the classroom that develop very good understanding of their roles as citizens within their school, local and wider communities. The school council, with representatives from all year groups, for example, play an increasingly active role in reviewing and improving the work of the school. Older pupils are trained as peer-group behaviour mentors to help other pupils improve their behaviour. Sixth form students take part in a wide range of voluntary work through Youth Action Voluntary Work, with each student giving fifteen hours of their time weekly, as part of the IB programme, to support many local voluntary organisations, sports activities, and the development of local wildlife areas, as well as contributing to Amnesty International work overseas.

Leadership and Management

Leadership and management of the strategy are good.

- The headteacher and senior leaders understand the principles of workforce reform and development very well. They are strongly committed to them.
- Very good progress has been made in implementing all phases of the workforce agreement. There is now a carefully defined and implemented strategy for PPA time, as part of a policy for the performance management of the wider workforce within the school as a whole. These arrangements have been made in parallel with refinements needed in managing the school's budget, addressing workforce reform requirements at the same time as targeting a budget deficit.
- Arrangements to provide management time for leaders to fulfil their responsibilities are good. These enable managers to monitor teaching and learning and the tracking pupils' performance well, although these processes are not implemented with equal rigour across all faculties. There are effective strategies in place to enable the headteacher and deputies to have dedicated time devoted to their roles whilst still remaining in close contact with pupils.
- Although the school recognises that additional improvements can be made in using ICT to improve the use of staff time, good use has already been made of it recently to provide interim reports to parents about their child's performance. A regular 'News' report and the school's website are used very effectively to share developments with parents and the wider community.

Impact on training and managing a reformed workforce

- Staff are strongly committed to developing an inclusive ethos. The school environment has been significantly improved in the last term. Its atmosphere is now calm and welcoming. A wide range of systems are in place to encourage greater involvement of and support for all staff. For example, significant improvements in improving time-keeping between lessons, uniform and behaviour from the start of this term have come about following the collective and consistent implementation of agreed strategies by all staff of the wider workforce. Staff and pupils have recognised and appreciated the improvements in their school and on learning as a result.
- Continuing professional development opportunities are available for all staff of the wider workforce. The expertise of the wider workforce is, in some cases, providing direct opportunities for teachers to gain additional, in-house training, for example using the IT technician's expertise.
- All staff are part of the school's performance management system. Although the roles and responsibilities of teaching staff have been reviewed in the last year, those of the administrative team need to be refined.
- Good progress has been made in providing appropriate resources to support the reformed workforce. In some areas, the wider workforce has been instrumental in sourcing and supporting the purchases of specialist state of the art equipment such as film equipment and related ICT resources.

Impact on inclusion

The impact on inclusion is good.

- The school has rationalised the deployment of the wider workforce well. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are most vulnerable are supported well. A range of experienced, committed and enthusiastic staff is available to help develop individual pupils, working closely with teachers across the school.

Areas for improvement

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

- continue to review the impact of workforce remodelling on standards and quality, developing the work of teaching assistants to ensure greater consistency between faculties where appropriate

- ensure the planning and follow-up of lessons taken by cover supervisors are appropriately challenging
- review administrative structures to support further the overall financial management of the school.

I hope these observations are useful for you in continuing to reform and develop the school workforce.

As explained in my earlier letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to you 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

Dr Calvin Pike
Additional Inspector