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Mr Simon Decker  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Decker

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 Rainham Mark on 19 and 20 March 2007, 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 good.

- Standards are well above the average compared with schools nationally at the end of Key Stage 3, 4 and in the sixth form. Results have risen steadily

over the last three years. Pupils make good progress, partly due to the effective and well-targeted support that is provided for them in and outside lessons from teachers and members of the wider workforce.

- Pupils have opportunities to understand and take responsibilities as members of the school and wider community. In many of these activities, pupils learn from and work with the school's wider workforce of technicians, support assistants and a growing number of adult volunteers. The School Council has been involved in various decisions and actions to improve provision. These have helped to gain the school's Healthy School award and sportsmark status.
- Pupils behave very well. They recognise the contribution of the wider workforce and appreciate the additional support provided within the school and from external agencies.

### Impact on the quality of teaching and learning

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

- A team of learning support assistants (LSAs) provide support to pupils with a range of identified needs within lessons. However, not all lessons plans identify the needs of the full range of abilities clearly enough and in some cases they are not shared with the LSAs.
- The development of the school's central Virtual Learning Environment, led by the head of technology, network manager and associated technicians, underpins learning. Staff and pupils have access to their individual sites to provide additional learning resources. Developments to extend parental access to the same facilities are underway to enable them to support pupils' learning at home. Interactive white boards are linked to the school's network and all teachers have laptops. During the past three years, there have also been considerable developments in tracking and recording pupils' progress using the school central data base.

### Impact on the quality of the curriculum

The impact on the quality of the curriculum is good.

- There is a very good careers and work-related programme for all pupils capitalizing on the good links with the careers services and the wider workforce.
- A new performing arts course with a vocational element, introduced in the sixth form, enables older pupils to work with performing arts technicians, a range of peripatetic musicians and other adults.
- There is a very wide range of extra curricular activities in which pupils can work with teachers, coaches and a range of other adults, especially in

sporting and performing arts activities, field trips and clubs related to all subjects of the curriculum. Some of these give pupils experience of working as volunteers in fund-raising activities.

### Pupil development and well-being

The impact on pupil development and well-being is outstanding.

- A very well-coordinated team of teachers, heads of school, heads of year and tutors, and a special education needs coordinator (SENCO) and learning support staff are effective in furthering pupils' personal development.
- Teachers and the wider workforce provide very good opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities as individuals and in groups for the care and support of each other in the school and the wider community.

### Leadership and Management

Leadership and management of the strategy are outstanding.

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have a thorough understanding of the principles of workforce reform. They are linked to the overall vision and strategic management of the school.
- Excellent progress has been made in implementing all phases of the workforce agreement. Within a relatively short time the school has built wider workforce teams and a line management structure that supports them very well.
- The headteacher and leadership team, including the business manager, have contributed to the school's success in gaining the Investors in People (IIP) for the second time and to its current work towards the Investment in Careers (IIC) and Eco-school awards. They have been underpinned by detailed, comparative cost analysis and the development of cost centres with related responsibilities across the school.

### Impact on training and managing a reformed workforce

- All staff, including the wider workforce, have access to a well targeted programme of continuing professional development that links well with the school's improvement plan. The school contributes financially to continuing professional development for support staff. Two learning support assistants, for example, are currently pursuing external degree courses. Feedback is given through regular reviews of staff performance. The school has developed a robust programme of recruitment linked with a clear policy to provide succession management opportunities for all staff.

## Impact on inclusion

The impact on inclusion is very good.

- The school's inclusive ethos has been reinforced through its workforce reform initiatives. A range of approaches involve all staff, pupils, parents and the outside community where appropriate in the shaping the direction and future success of the school.
- There is good in-class support for pupils with special needs who are encouraged to participate fully in classroom and extra-curricular activities. A range of additional challenges are provided for more able pupils or those who are underachieving. The school's clear internal systems and close liaison with external agencies ensure the needs of pupils are met well.

## Areas for improvement

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

- evaluate the impact of workforce reform initiatives on provision more formally to inform future decision-making
- develop greater consistency in the preparation and use of lesson plans to inform learning support assistants in advance of the work in which they will be engaged in classrooms.

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

Dr Calvin Pike  
Additional Inspector