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Mr R I MacKinnon
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Dear Mr MacKinnon

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Training and developing the reformed workforce

Thank you for your co-operation and hospitality, and that of the staff, during my visit to Bexley Grammar School on Monday 02 and Tuesday 03 July 2007 to evaluate the impact of the reformed 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 students, scrutiny of documentation, and observation of two lessons and an academic mentoring session.

The overall effectiveness of the reformed workforce in your school was judged to be good with some outstanding features

Impact of the reformed workforce on achievement and standards

The impact of the reformed workforce on achievement and standards is good.

- The department for special educational and additional needs (SEAN) made up of higher level teaching assistants (HTLA) provides good levels of support for students, enabling them to make good progress.
- Members of the reformed workforce have established strong relationships with learners. They provide continuity of support which increases students' enjoyment and achievement.
- The reformed workforce and additional specialist staff make a significant contribution to improving students' personal development and well-being, in lessons and extra-curricular activities, by supporting students on the autistic spectrum and those with specific learning difficulties. They also act as academic mentors, and provide emotional and social support through the work of the peer mentors and the school counsellor.

Impact of the reformed workforce on the quality of teaching and learning

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

- Strong relationships and consistent working practices have been established between the reformed workforce and teaching staff. A shared understanding of students' needs leads to effective support and intervention.
- The reformed workforce keeps teaching staff well informed of individuals' developing knowledge and skills. These staff produce well designed, lively and informative newsletters, instructive booklets about students' individual needs and lead in-service training on relevant aspects of their expertise. Teachers make good use of this information in their lesson planning to provide resources and activities that are matched to the needs of individual students.
- The skills of HLTA are used well to support individual students, teach whole classes and to provide booster classes to targeted students. Although the reformed workforce has access to assessment information, these staff are not fully involved in using it effectively to set specific targets for students' progress.

Impact of the reformed workforce on the quality of the curriculum

The impact of the reformed workforce on the quality of the curriculum is good.

- The additional expertise of the reformed workforce has been used effectively to enrich curriculum provision through extra-curricular clubs and by accompanying students to a very wide range of residential experiences and day visits. The Chinese club organised by an HLTA provides an excellent example of how students are encouraged to celebrate diversity. The club

allows students who speak Cantonese and Mandarin to improve their language skills whilst exploring their cultural identity. This is reinforced by opportunities to share their achievements with other students through assemblies and presentations.

- HLTAs are helping to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of students at risk of underachievement through booster classes. However, the impact on students' learning is not evaluated in ways that can always best inform future planning.

Leadership and management of the reformed workforce

The leadership and management of the reformed workforce are outstanding.

- The headteacher and senior leaders have a very strong commitment to training and developing the workforce at all levels, as identified in the school development plan. The deployment, training and development of the reformed workforce are carefully planned to improve outcomes for students and to link to school improvement priorities.
- Well designed, comprehensive performance management procedures are in place for the reformed workforce. There is a clear rationale which focuses on how each role contributes to teaching and learning, an appraisal of effectiveness and objectives set to develop expertise further.
- Members of the reformed workforce are provided with good opportunities for leadership and management within their own areas of responsibility. The leadership of the SEAN department is particularly effective.

The impact on inclusion

- The school has successfully developed an inclusive ethos where members of the reformed workforce are valued and their contribution recognised by staff and students.
- The reformed workforce has enhanced the school's capacity to match teaching to individual students' learning needs and to improve their personal development and well-being.

Areas for improvement

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

- evaluate further the impact of the reformed workforce on students' learning
- involve the reformed workforce more in using assessment information effectively to set specific targets for students' progress.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to train and develop the reformed 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