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Mrs Linda Bamford
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bamford

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Deploying, training and developing the reformed workforce

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on Monday 05 November 2007 to evaluate the impact of the deployment, training and development of the reformed workforce. For the purposes of this survey inspection, the term 'reformed workforce' will apply to any person employed by or working in partnership with the school who is not a qualified teacher.

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 discussions with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of some teaching and students' work.

The overall effectiveness of the reformed workforce in your school was judged to be outstanding.

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

- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, about 15% of the school, make particularly good progress because of direct support from learning support assistants. Advanced Skills Teachers gain additional time to improve learning because of the flexibility introduced through workforce reform. Specifically, they have helped mathematics standards to recover from relatively disappointing results in 2006. Classes in Years 9 to 11 have

less focused support and their progress in mathematics and science remains less than expected.

- Pastoral assistants promote much improved use of data amongst staff and students. They also monitor and support students in danger of under-performing. A group of 14 GCSE candidates in 2007 improved their results as a result of such support. In the sixth form, this role contributed to raising A2 results in 2007 to their highest ever level. Students and staff have benefited from a new clarity about targets and how to meet them.
- The reformed workforce makes a significant contribution to students' personal development, which is outstanding. It helps to ensure that students' attitudes remain consistently positive. Well trained learning support assistants command students' full respect. Individual interactions with challenging or vulnerable students help to avoid exclusions or minor sanctions and boost students' self-esteem significantly. Rising attendance levels and drastically reduced use of sanctions for poor behaviour coincide with the introduction of workforce reform.

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

- Good quality teaching draws heavily on the contribution of learning support assistants and they promote a good atmosphere for learning. The successful match of work to groups or individuals often depends on their support. This can be especially effective when the learning support assistant has relevant subject expertise. Learning support assistants have provided good training for teachers in managing specific learning needs.
- Cover supervisors help to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching. Their lessons are planned and taught to the same demanding criteria as teachers use. Monitoring by senior managers ensures the criteria are met.
- The use of cover supervisors and learning support assistants means that teachers are better able to contribute to a well organised programme of additional support for colleagues or students.

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

- The reformed workforce contributes to high levels of enjoyment, personal safety, health and healthy eating. Learning support assistants and pastoral assistants strengthen many students' self-belief and show interest in their extra-curricular commitments. Some provision is possible only because members of the reformed workforce help to run day visits, residential field trips and events. For instance, there have been more than a dozen 'family learning days' since 2003. They boost the confidence of students and their families in key curricular skills and depend heavily on the reformed workforce.

Leadership and management of the reformed workforce are outstanding.

- The overall impact of the reformed workforce is outstanding primarily because leaders and managers have a longstanding and strong commitment to it. For instance, the role of director of business administration was created in 1998 and given senior management status. The reformed workforce has expanded and, from the outset, its work has been integrated with that of teaching staff.
- Performance management and continuing professional development have promoted high status for the reformed workforce and clear scope for their career development. The role of examinations officer, carried out by a former invigilator, also demonstrates the school's skill at recruiting and promoting within the reformed workforce.
- Monitoring of the work is very rigorous.
- The willingness of all staff to work flexibly reflects well on how the deployment, training and development of the workforce are managed. You and senior managers have shown that workforce reform benefits students, reduces stress on staff and allows them to focus on improving learning.

The impact of the reformed workforce on inclusion is outstanding.

- Focusing the support of the reformed workforce on students and families with the greatest need is working very well. Vulnerable students benefit greatly from support in lessons, regular mentoring and family learning days. The reformed workforce's support for extra-curricular activities allows more students to participate and the inclusion of those with a wider range of needs. Gifted and talented students receive regular support in class and a summer school programme, which is staffed extensively by the reformed workforce. The school's flexible regime allows teachers to devote 'gained time' to able students taking GCSEs early or having special tuition in preparation for Oxbridge applications.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- in line with the school improvement plan, refocusing non-teaching support to provide additional help in the Year 9 -11 classes where progress in science and mathematics remains less than expected.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Robert Drew
Additional Inspector