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Mrs S Roberts  
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Dear Mrs Roberts

Ofsted survey inspection programme – the impact of new models of leadership on school improvement

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 02 July 2008 to evaluate the impact of new models of leadership on school improvement.

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 governors, staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the model of leadership, a hard federation with another special school, was judged to be outstanding.

The impact of the model of leadership on achievement and standards is good.

- Overall, standards are well below national expectations because of pupils' special educational needs and the interruptions to learning that many have experienced. However, as a result of the improved systems for tracking and reviewing pupils' progress most are making good progress and achieving well. Underachievement is detected early and appropriate, individualised intervention strategies are implemented to support pupils.
- In the last inspection, pupils' writing skills were identified as an area for improvement. The expertise within the federation has been utilised effectively to tackle the underlying issues. New leadership of the subject is driving improvement at a pace.

- Pupils are clear about how they can improve their work and their methods of learning. The school is quite rightly looking to develop this understanding further by identifying subject specific targets for individual pupils.
- Warm and supportive relationships are an important factor in pupils' enjoyment of school and their well-being: they give pupils confidence and inspire them to succeed.

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

- Teachers benefit from working collaboratively within the federation to develop subject expertise and teaching methodology, for example, assessment for learning.
- Good teaching and learning practice is shared across the federation. Specialist teaching, in particular, has been greatly strengthened. The successful learning programme for autistic pupils is an example of how the federation has enabled the school to extend provision to meet the needs of pupils.
- The individual support given to pupils by teachers and teaching assistants outside of lessons helps to maximise the potential of every learner. In the context of lessons, where there is often a very wide range of ability and need, there is further work to do in ensuring the most able are always stretched.

The impact of the model of leadership on the quality of the curriculum is good.

- Shared facilities across the federation give additional flexibility to the curriculum. The quality and variety of pupils' learning experiences and extra-curricular activities have improved.
- The federation's investment in improving the infrastructure for information and communication technology (ICT) means that pupils have better access to computers. The use of ICT as a tool for learning and a means of personalising the curriculum is increasingly effective.

The impact of the new model of leadership on the quality of leadership and management throughout the school is outstanding.

- You and your senior leaders have a clear vision about how the federation can improve outcomes for pupils.
- Structures for leadership and governance have been reshaped successfully to facilitate the partnership working at the heart of the federation.
- Roles and responsibilities have been clarified and subject leadership developed.
- The federation has increased leadership capacity. This is demonstrated in improved systems for performance management, monitoring and evaluating teaching, data management and tracking pupils' progress. In addition, opportunities for continuous professional development and career progression have been extended.
- Increased leadership capacity is reflected in pupils' improving progress.

- Governors are well informed and influential in establishing the strategic direction of the federation.

The impact of the new model of leadership on inclusion is outstanding.

- The achievement and well-being of every pupil is central to the values underpinning the federation.
- The school's caring and supportive ethos is permeated by the belief that all pupils can succeed. Staff are creative and effective in designing personalised programmes to develop pupils' learning and social skills.
- Pupils and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Almost all parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt their sons' progress had improved since joining the school.
- The home agency liaison coordinator is highly effective in working with families to support pupils' learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to help stretch the most able pupils in lessons, make more use of exemplar materials to demonstrate the highest levels of achievement.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the leadership of your school and the federation.

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

Jacqueline White  
Her Majesty's Inspector