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Mrs M Karaolis
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Karaolis

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Workforce Reform: has it made a difference?

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during our visit on 30 September 2008 to evaluate the impact of the deployment, training and development of the wider workforce. For the purposes of this survey inspection, the term 'wider 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 part of a lesson.

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

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

- Members of the wider workforce make an outstanding contribution to improving students' achievement. The coherent, shared understanding of the needs of individuals and groups of students leads to very effective intervention and support within and outside the classroom.
- The school uses robust and comprehensive systems to monitor and track progress and can provide clear evidence of the positive impact of the wider workforce on students' achievement and well-being.
- The improving attendance and positive attitudes to learning of disaffected students are partly a result of the very effective teamwork of the

attendance officer, learning mentors, the school counsellor and pastoral staff who have developed good home school links and provide carefully planned and structured support.

- The high quality support provided by members of the wider workforce to students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language helps them to make very good progress.

The impact of the wider workforce on the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- The very strong partnerships between teaching assistants, learning mentors, teachers and students are fundamental to everyone's enjoyment of learning. Students talk convincingly about how members of the wider workforce bolster their confidence and self-esteem and how this allows them to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Excellent, collaborative planning and teamwork between teachers and the wider workforce underpins very effective teaching that matches learning to students' individual needs.
- The deployment of well trained teaching assistants and learning mentors allow teachers to focus on planning challenging learning activities, maintaining the pace of lessons and improving students' motivation to learn.
- Curriculum assistants and site staff maintain a very pleasant learning environment for the whole school community

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

- The allocation of teaching assistants to work in key stages and specific classes allows them to develop and broaden their knowledge of the curriculum and contribute to curriculum planning whilst providing continuity of support for students and teachers. For example a teaching assistant who works with Year 9 students on the construction bus as part of the Aim Higher programme continues to support those students when they study a construction course in Year 10.
- A wide range of students' needs, interests and abilities are encouraged through support from the wider workforce outside lessons. These activities are carefully planned to enhance students' capacity for learning.

The leadership and management of the wider workforce are outstanding.

- You and your senior leaders have a strong vision to improve the learning of every student and have created a common sense of purpose amongst your staff. Consequently members of the wider workforce are fully integrated into the life of the school, have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities and hold high expectations of the quality of their work.
- Members of the learning support faculty are provided with excellent opportunities for professional development through regular in service training attended by all staff and through well planned team meetings to disseminate good practice and information on relevant training. The annual residential conference provides a good opportunity for all members of the wider workforce to contribute to school development planning.

- The performance review process has been carefully designed to recognise effectiveness, increase accountability and improve the career development of the wider workforce. The introduction of the formal observation of learning support staff is providing useful feedback on practice. However, there is some variation in the quality of target setting and some uncertainty of how the process will contribute to the review process.

The impact of the wider workforce on inclusion is outstanding.

- Ravenscroft is a very inclusive and caring school where every individual is valued. There is a strong focus on improving the life chances of all students.
- The high quality of support provided by the wider workforce is matched to the specific needs of individual students very effectively to sustain their very good academic and personal development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that targets arising from formal observations are sufficiently sharply focused and developmental to inform performance reviews.

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

Anne Wellham
Her Majesty's Inspector