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29 September 2008

Mr D Davies
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Davies

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

Thank you for your co-operation and that of your staff and students in your absence during my visit on 25 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 very short observations of a number of lessons and extra curricular activities.

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

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

- Although unvalidated results from 2008 indicate a fall in the proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at A* to C including English and mathematics, as well as a slightly declining pattern at Key Stage 3, students continue to achieve well overall. Their achievement in English is particularly high. A relatively small number of support staff members contribute directly to this, which limits the overall impact made by workforce reform on achievement. However, those members of the wider workforce that do

support students' learning in their lessons do so effectively, for example in English.

- The rate of attendance is below average and is not showing significant improvement. Partly as a result of long term staff absence, the administrative staff involved do not have the time to deal with it effectively enough; nor is there sufficient clarity about how they should liaise and share responsibility with senior teaching staff or form tutors.
- Students' attitudes to learning and behaviour are consistently good. Through their role modelling and the high levels of care they show, support staff as well as teachers contribute to this very well. Many members of the wider workforce are form tutors. However, some pastoral systems to support students' wellbeing and behaviour are insufficiently effective in the experience of some students.

The impact of the wider workforce on the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Its impact is limited because it takes place on a relatively small scale.

- The learning managers are successful at supporting students experiencing academic difficulties. They adeptly refine the curriculum or explain issues in a way which the students find beneficial.
- In the relatively few lessons where teaching assistants are deployed, they are consistently effective in supporting students' learning, especially those with learning difficulties. They know the students' needs and targets well, kindly and patiently helping them to work towards them.

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

- The school continues to provide and refine an outstanding, relevant, motivating and innovative curriculum. This promotes students' high achievement. Members of the wider workforce contribute well to this aspect. For example, the three teaching assistants specifically deployed to subject departments contribute much to helping teachers to ensure that curriculum plans match the students' needs closely. They are able to do this because they know the students' and community's needs well and are often responsible for keeping records of achievement.
- Students' confident use of information communication technology is very widespread and contributes much to their learning across the curriculum. The school's technicians make an outstanding contribution in enabling this to happen.
- The deputy special educational needs co-ordinator, who is a former teaching assistant, operates a successful new nurture group for lower attaining pupils in Year 7.
- There is a very wide range of well attended and organised and inclusive extra curricular activities. These promote good learning and further enhance students' attitudes to school. Members of the wider workforce make a strong contribution to these, leading many activities.

The leadership and management of the wider workforce are satisfactory.

- School leaders, under your strong direction, provide a clear and rightly unremitting focus on raising academic standards and achievement which is well

understood by staff and students. This clear leadership leads to the school's successes and makes it a happy and exciting place of learning.

- Nevertheless, there is not a clear strategy or policy for the induction, deployment, development or purpose of the wider workforce. The various roles undertaken by the wider workforce have been decided and agreed over time and these are much valued by senior leaders and teaching staff. However, there is not a fully coherent structure or career path for them. Consequently, there is scope to use their skills more effectively in achieving the school's goals.
- All members of the wider workforce have appropriate performance management arrangements, linked to the improvement plan. However, the policy for this is based on the teachers' document, without sufficient specific reference to the particular training and development needs of the wider workforce.
- The self-evaluation by the school of the contribution of the wider workforce, carried out specifically for this inspection, identifies a wide range of tasks being carried out by support staff, but is not as clear about the impact these make on learning and other student outcomes.

The impact of the wider workforce on inclusion is good.

- Stretford High is a welcoming, friendly and inclusive school.
- Some of the most valuable work done by members of the reformed workforce is with some more vulnerable students, including those with statements of special educational need.
- Members of the wider workforce make a very positive contribution to a highly inclusive and effective range of extra curricular activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the systems, and the capacity of the wider workforce involved, for raising attendance levels
- establishing a clear policy or statement which sets out the purposes of the wider workforce in meeting the school's primary objectives, providing a clearer rationale for the deployment of, and training, induction and career structure for, support staff.

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

As I explained in the 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

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector