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Mrs E Warren
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Dear Mrs Warren

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 pupils, during my visit on 04 December 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 pupils, observations in several lessons, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and discussions with the School Improvement Partner.

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

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

- In 2008, standards declined notably after a rise in 2007 and floor targets were not met in both Key Stages 1 and 2, although you have produced data to indicate mitigating factors. Agreed school targets also were not met. Despite their diligence, members of the wider workforce are not contributing sufficiently to, or effectively enough guided in, raising standards. Teaching Assistants (TAs), who form the majority of the wider workforce in school, work hard to support groups of pupils in lessons, especially those who are lower attaining; they are deployed by teachers more with these pupils than you intend. You expect that this work will raise

standards. However, the support teaching assistants provide is too often not well enough focused or targeted to meet specific, assessed needs of the pupils. The work they lead can be too hard or too easy. In some cases, in small groups led by teaching assistants pupils lose concentration for periods of time, especially when the teaching assistant is focused on another pupil, and as a result their progress is too slow.

- Attendance has improved recently partly as a result of the proactive work of the attendance manager, though it remains below average.

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

- When working with groups in lessons, teaching assistants have strong and supportive relationships with pupils, follow teachers' planning closely and often use attractive and motivating resources. However, the work is not well enough matched to pupils' individual needs and teachers' planning does not show clearly enough what specific needs the planned activities are intended to address. Pupils become too reliant on help from teaching assistants and are not sufficiently encouraged to learn independently or, where possible, to find ways of working problems out for themselves. Some questioning by teaching assistants is good supporting learning well, but often questions do not sufficiently promote better thinking and learning. They make insufficiently robust checks and assessments during activities about what the pupils have learned and understood. This means that work is not adapted sufficiently, as they go along, to take account of how much pupils understand.
- A more productive aspect of the role of TAs is where they lead specific interventions for particular pupils or groups outside of lessons. The teaching assistants receive appropriate training for these activities, which are based on sound assessments of the pupils' needs and have clear learning objectives. You are able to show the clear progress of pupils through these activities. This is an important, but relatively small, part of the work of teaching assistants.
- Improved assessment information is now available to staff as a result of the work of the data manager. This is used to place pupils in teaching groups but not well enough to ensure that pupil needs are always appropriately met.

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

- Members of the reformed workforce lead or contribute to some out-of-school-hours activities, such as the breakfast club, 'multi skills', netball and dance.
- Teaching assistants are allocated an hour per week to liaise with class teachers, reviewing and planning lessons together, an opportunity which they value and which ensures they gain an understanding of the curriculum and know what is expected of them.
- The potential of workforce reform to enhance the curriculum through the practical use of particular expertise within the wider workforce, or by releasing others, is not as well exploited as it could be. However, there are some examples of creative approaches, such as giving the deputy headteacher extra time through budget savings from workforce reform to

enhance mathematics teaching, and the employment of external sports coaches for an extra-curricular activity.

- Specialist teaching assistants enable designated pupils with particular special educational needs to access the full range of the curriculum.

The leadership and management of the wider workforce are inadequate.

- You and other senior managers have a clear and shared strategic view of the school and its development needs. You provide consistent and clear direction and have put in place a number of whole school systems and approaches which aim to raise standards. In respect of workforce reform, these include provision mapping, the funding and deployment of teaching assistants in all teams and classes and consistent approaches to lesson planning.
- These systems all operate but are not sufficiently effective in assuring the quality of provision for pupils in lessons. In other words, the daily reality does not consistently match the strategy. This is largely because there is insufficient or ineffective monitoring and management of the systems on a day-to-day basis. The quality and outcomes of the hard work teaching assistants do are not adequately assured or evaluated, whilst their training and coaching needs are not consistently met. These are functions which might be expected to be taken principally by middle leaders but which are not yet happening effectively enough.
- Performance management is appreciated by the wider workforce as a positive process but is not doing enough to improve practice in all areas. However, staff feel well supported through it. Teaching assistants consider their work is valued and the school secretary, for example, is rightly delighted with her progress towards an appropriate qualification.
- Members of the wider workforce carry out a number of administrative functions effectively, which helps reduce the workload of teachers and managers appropriately.

The impact of the wider workforce on inclusion is satisfactory.

- Members of the wider workforce, such as the family liaison officer and the Polish parent support assistant, help particular pupils and their families to integrate quickly into school life and support them in dealing with a range of issues in and out of school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that teaching assistants, when working in lessons, provide work and teaching support which is much more closely targeted to the needs of the pupils and is explicitly linked to assessments of those pupils' needs
- evaluate more robustly the impact of the work of teaching assistants in lessons on raising standards
- improve the deployment and management and of the work of teaching assistants, especially by middle leaders, and provide better opportunities for them to develop their skills further.

This visit has raised concerns about aspects of the school's work. I will report these to the Regional Divisional Manager who will consider what action to take and may arrange an inspection of the whole school.

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

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector