

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr M Booth  
Headteacher  
Walbottle Campus Technology College  
Hexham Road  
Walbottle  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
Tyne and Wear  
NE15 9TP

Dear Mr Booth

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 my visit with Robin Hammerton HMI on 05 and 06 November 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 observations around the school.

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

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

- There has been a continuing notable rise in standards in recent years. Members of the wider workforce have contributed well to this improvement, particularly with more vulnerable or lower attaining students.
- Teaching assistants lead and manage a range of effective support programmes, in which students successfully attain GCSE level and adult literacy and numeracy qualifications. Also a range of targeted programmes that support students' personal, social and emotional development. These have been successful in raising attendance, reducing exclusions and, in a

number of cases, enabling students to continue their education into the sixth form.

- Students provided a number of examples of how the support that they had received from the wider workforce had a direct impact on their achievement. Several students were clear about how additional teaching assistant support had led to a rise in their attainment. Others explained how they had gained marketable workplace skills, and additional qualifications, enabling them to continue their education.

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

- Teachers' workload has been effectively reduced by efficient and well structured workforce reform. Relationships between teachers and members of the wider workforce are characterised by a clear mutual respect.
- The newly formed team of progress coaches is well organised and committed. They provide an increased focus on academic progress alongside pastoral care which is appreciated by students of all attainment levels. However, progress coaches are too often called in to support students for whom the school's provision or curriculum is insufficiently motivating or effective when improving that provision would be more appropriate.
- Members of the wider workforce are knowledgeable about Every Child Matters and use this framework to plan their work effectively.
- The school's recruitment, training and deployment of cover supervisors are particularly effective. This team is highly skilled and motivated, benefits from well planned induction and ongoing training and is able to deliver an increasingly high standard of lessons.

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

- Members of the wider workforce take an active role in providing a range of enrichment activities and extended services opportunities that promote academic, social and physical development. Students speak highly of these and are clear about their benefits, particularly in terms of developing their confidence, self-esteem and team-working skills. However, these are not well coordinated as part of a strategic curriculum offer which takes account of equal opportunities issues or is related closely enough to the work of teachers.
- Members of the support staff are actively involved in curriculum and provision planning and delivery for more vulnerable students. In the learning and development and student support centres this is particularly good and highly relevant to this very small group of students.

The leadership and management of the wider workforce are good.

- You and your senior leaders have a strong and unstinting commitment to the role and raising the status of the wider workforce which is well structured into several effectively led teams. Members of the wider workforce feel valued in carrying out a very wide range of functions, some of which were done by teachers in the past. They provide good value for money.

- The work of the head of support services is very effective. She is proactive in seeking opportunities to develop the roles and functions of the reformed workforce and in holding them accountable.
- The whole-school performance management policy applies equally to all staff and adds significant value to the work of the wider workforce. Individual targets link well to current school improvement objectives but do not include specific enough objectives relating to student outcomes.
- There is a high quality continuing professional development programme that members of the wider workforce attend alongside teachers and many of them contribute to leading sessions and workshops. There is also a shared expectation that members of the wider workforce will gain qualifications whilst working in the school and this has enabled many to benefit from significant career enhancement.
- In its self evaluation, the school has identified correctly the many strengths of the wider workforce. However, it has not identified the areas for improvement as plainly, including the fact that it is not always clear how their deployment has enabled teachers to work in more effective ways, or that more could be done for a greater number of students.

The impact of the wider workforce on inclusion is good.

- Walbottle Campus Technology College is a welcoming, responsive and inclusive school that strives to provide an appropriate education for all of its students. Members of the reformed workforce make a positive contribution to the education of a range of students, especially the most vulnerable and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- consider how targets in the existing performance management arrangements for members of the support staff might include quantifiable objectives linked to students' progress
- use the well-functioning workforce reform structures more effectively to ensure that there is a greater coherence between the work of the teachers and the wider workforce and, as a result, there is more direct impact on improving further the curriculum and teaching for more students.

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

Chris Wood  
Her Majesty's Inspector