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Mr C Humphreys
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Humphreys

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 November 2008 to look at work in CPD.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of CPD the visit had a particular focus on how professional development activities impact on raising standards and achievement.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgement about the overall effectiveness of CPD included interviews with senior managers and staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation and a short observation of a lesson.

The overall effectiveness of CPD was judged to be outstanding.

The strengths identified

- There is an excellent link between CPD, performance management and the school improvement plan which all indicate a strong drive for improvement. Staff are set performance management targets based on school themes from the improvement plan. The school uses the same performance management system for all staff and sets targets appropriately. Performance management targets for teachers in particular are well monitored and provide a high level of challenge.
- The new approach to school improvement planning involves the wider school community in its development and fosters the leadership potential

in staff who are not senior managers who act as 'theme leaders' and take responsibility for delivering targets. For example a teaching assistant leading on personal care and a parent on communication. CPD extends far beyond the school and involves distributed leadership roles.

- CPD is well linked to wider national initiatives such as phonics, the school improvement planning framework and building schools for the future.
- The school displays an outstanding commitment to the development of CPD and the professional development of all staff in the school. This is acknowledged by the staff. The school's approach to CPD is inclusive and this fosters good team work and high staff morale. The school is a 'learning community' and endeavours to get the best out of people. Staff are able to give many examples of how individual interests have been supported, such as supporting a member of staff on a foundation degree and opportunities to develop new leadership skills in managing educational visits and the global dimension.
- Very effective CPD recognises and responds to the changing nature of the student intake, such as those with autism and complex needs.
- Evidence clearly supports the view that CPD has a good impact and has been instrumental in raising standards and achievement and improving the quality of education received by students. There has been an increase in the proportion of students in Key Stage 4 who achieve accreditation across all levels in core subjects. The work in improving outcomes for students at Key Stage 4 has been carefully planned and monitored with very positive outcomes. Phonics teaching has been successfully developed for a target group of students and adapted to meet the needs of students with complex learning disabilities and/or difficulties. This has had a clear impact on the speaking and listening skills of these students and increased their levels of confidence. School data shows there is an improving trend of achievement. Overall, school evidence shows that CPD represents excellent value for money.
- CPD is very well planned, flexible and responsive to individual need. The school three year training programme is carefully targeted. The school uses a mix of twilight sessions, training days, peer coaching projects, a range of external courses and also utilises the expertise of its own staff. The school ensures it covers all statutory training alongside addressing school priorities. Collaboration and team development is a strong feature of the school's approach to CPD. The CPD milestone map provides an excellent overview of what has been achieved and how the different CPD strands link together and the impact of the staffing restructure in 2005.
- The headteacher is very reflective on CPD and uses his own CPD extremely well to evaluate the school's leadership capabilities and his own practice which informs the future whole school priorities.
- Individual CPD activities are evaluated effectively to assess the impact on students and the personal development of staff.
- Teaching assistants are given many opportunities to develop their roles, take on responsibilities and play a key part in the life of the school. They lead on such areas as enterprise week, therapies, personal care and healthy schools.

- Staff are provided with many opportunities for CPD, career progression and fresh challenges this is reflected in good staff retention and high levels of enthusiasm.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- the overarching school improvement plan does not yet contain rigorous enough criteria to measure the success of actions in order to judge the impact of some strategies.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop CPD in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh
Her Majesty's Inspector