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Mr P Bowden
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bowden

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 on 13 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 observation of parts of lessons.

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.

- The wider workforce comprises staff with specific roles and responsibilities focused on raising standards and students' achievement. The support they give releases teachers from administrative and supervisory tasks and allows them to focus on students' learning.
- Members of the wider workforce have contributed significantly to a marked improvement in examination results and in students' achievement.
- The very effective help given by learning support assistants enables students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Students were very appreciative of the extra help with homework and

coursework they had been given which enabled them to achieve well in tests and examinations.

- Members of the wider workforce have contributed well towards enabling all students at Ferryhill to achieve at least one and usually five passes at GCSE. Their work in the learning support unit ensures that students who may otherwise be in danger of not completing their education have work which is well matched to their needs. They are able to gain GCSE passes in English, mathematics and science and leave school equipped with a range of skills which prepare them well for future employment. The number of GCSE or equivalent passes for the students working in the unit has risen this year.
- The work of the wider workforce and has resulted in improvements in behaviour and in a downward trend in the number of permanent exclusions. Students generally behave well in the calm and well organised environment of the isolation room and complete suitable work. Attendance is improving and is now close to the national average. Members of the wider workforce are using every possible strategy to improve these figures further. The support given by staff in the student services department has greatly enhanced the personal development and well-being of the large numbers of students they see each year. They provide very good support for those with personal and emotional difficulties as well as promoting healthy lifestyles.

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

- In all of the part-lessons seen members of the wider workforce were making a valuable contribution towards students making at least satisfactory and usually good progress. Teaching assistants have good relationships with their students and understand their needs well. Their high expectations coupled with clear explanations ensure students, particularly those with a short concentration span, achieve the best they can.
- Assessment data is well managed by the examinations and assessment officer and ensures parents, teachers and students have reliable information about target grades and progress being made towards them.
- Cover supervisors ensure that set work is completed and school routines are followed in all lessons. They provide valuable feedback to teachers on the progress and behaviour of their classes.

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

- The wider workforce makes a major contribution towards providing a very appropriate skill and vocational based curriculum for students at risk of disaffection and exclusion. They help to provide very good opportunities for students to undertake work based learning and hence increase their chances of finding permanent employment.
- Members of the wider workforce make a good contribution to extra - curricular activities by accompanying students on trips and visits and by running clubs after school. Of particular benefit to students is their staffing of the well attended e-learning centre where many students complete their work before catching the late bus home.

- Members of the wider workforce run booster classes to help students with coursework, revision for examinations and homework. Students spoke warmly of the extra help they had had in improving their literacy and numeracy skills which enable them to gain higher grades at GCSE.

The leadership and management of the wider workforce are good.

- You and your senior leaders have a clear commitment to training and developing the wider workforce. Members of the wider workforce feel valued, are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are an integrated part of the school 'team.'
- This workforce is very well managed on a day to day basis by the business manager. There are clear line management structures in place. All have access to appropriate training. Although clear performance management procedures are in place the school recognises the need to evaluate further the impact of the wider workforce on students learning and achievement.
- The school's analysis of expenditure demonstrates a measurable saving on staffing and transport costs because of the effective deployment of the wider workforce, particularly the cover supervisors.

The impact of the wider workforce on inclusion is good.

- This is an inclusive school and members of the wider workforce contribute significantly to this. They provide very good support for vulnerable, disaffected and at-risk students.
- A group of students with very different needs spoke very warmly of the support and encouragement they had received from members of the wider workforce. Students who had left school were keen to explain how important the support and guidance they had received had been in helping them to get jobs and places on college courses. Others spoke of the responsibilities they have been given which had increased their confidence and the help they had received in improving their basic skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- further evaluate the impact of the wider workforce on students' learning
- provide opportunities for the wider workforce to develop their roles further in order to have an even more direct effect on students' learning.

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

Ann Wallis
Additional Inspector