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Mr S Duffy
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Duffy

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 29 September 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 observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of CPD was judged to be outstanding.

The strengths identified

- There is an excellent commitment and ethos to the professional development of all the staff in the school. This is reflected in your commendable vision to ensure that CPD permeates all appropriate aspects of school life in order to raise standards and achievement.
- As a Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) training school, you together with the CPD team have been instrumental in developing Chipping Norton into a genuine professional learning community where the culture of sharing best practice is firmly established. The enthusiasm displayed by the staff in discussions was a fitting tribute to this; without

exception all spoke with refreshing honesty about the quality of training on offer and how it had helped them grow professionally. Staff well-being, quite rightly, is given a high priority and the strategies to promote this are impressive.

- The CPD programme is both innovative and flexible to accommodate an impressive range of training opportunities for staff which encompass teaching and learning, family support and extended services, and business and administration. The Monday seminar programme and the organisation of in-service training days are excellent examples of your imaginative approach to training which is always under review. All documentation is easily accessible and well presented.
- The large number of support staff possess a range of valuable skills and they make a significant contribution to student achievement and care. It is important that the school closely monitors their deployment to ensure maximum use is made of their expertise.
- Coaching and mentoring is developing well across the school and an increasing number of staff including support staff are volunteering to contribute. Workshops focus strongly on improving teaching and learning and staff are incorporating new approaches in their practice as observed in the two purposeful lessons where philosophy for learning was being used to promote debate and thinking skills. The induction procedures for new staff including Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) are commendable and enable them to hit the ground running when they take up post.
- A significant number of staff are engaged on a range of accredited courses leading to further qualifications, for example the Masters programme, National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA) and Leading from the Middle. This is a fitting testament to the school's commitment to encourage all staff to become leaders of learning in order to drive improvement.
- There is a strong alignment between CPD, performance management and the school's training and improvement plan. The performance management system is used well to identify targets, for example, student performance at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. This is documented clearly in performance management records which show how CPD relates to individual, departmental and whole targets. In discussions the staff were very clear about these links. The fortnightly Link meetings are an effective investment as they enable the leadership team to check the ongoing performance of departments and individuals and intervene appropriately.
- The management and coordination of CPD are excellent and the systems for monitoring the quality of CPD are rigorous. The school's evaluation of the impact of CPD activities on improvement, although good, is an aspect that we agreed that you wished to get sharper. The school evaluates the cost effectiveness of CPD assiduously to ensure value for money.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- further develop the good systems for measuring the impact of CPD activities on improvement

- monitor the deployment of the support staff to ensure maximum use is made of their expertise.

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 will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Mary Harlow
Her Majesty's Inspector