

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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Ms M Getheridge
Headteacher
Writhlington School
Knobsbury Lane
Radstock
BA3 3NQ

Dear Ms Getheridge

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 20 October 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

- As stated your excellent CPD plan, there is an outstanding commitment to the professional development of all the staff in the school to ensure that they are fully equipped with the essential skills required to continue to raise standards of attainment and achievement. I note that the provisional results in 2008 for A levels or equivalent Level 3 qualifications, GCSE 5 A*-C and the Year 9 national tests continue to show significant improvement and are the best ever achieved by the school.
- The school's vision to transform teaching and learning in preparation for its move into a new Building Schools for the Future (BSF) building is commendable. Moreover, the forward planning invested by you and the

senior team to ensure the CPD programme embraces the educational challenges and opportunities such innovation provides, is impressive. In particular, the current developments in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to personalize learning for both the students and staff, coupled with the school's plans to extend access to CPD, teaching and learning web-sites to partner schools and beyond, are excellent.

- Over the years you have capitalised successfully on your specialist status to ensure that Writhlington develops into a genuine professional learning community where the culture of sharing best practice is firmly established both within and outside of the school. Many staff contribute to high profile regional and national conferences such as National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) and The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and several are involved in designing and leading diploma and masters programmes. I note that your work in business and enterprise education is recognized nationally.
- 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 Wednesday afternoon CPD sessions have been planned thoughtfully to meet the professional needs of individuals and whole school improvement priorities, for example the good training provided by expert staff in developing ICT skills. This provision is leading to accreditation in ICT for all staff; this is a sensible expectation to meet the future teaching and learning needs.
- Such high quality CPD is leading to pleasing improvements in classroom practice. For example the skilled use of the interactive whiteboard in the German lesson observed ensured the students sustained motivation and made good progress. The imaginative use of a PowerPoint and video 'Belfast' which was creatively designed to teach elements of trigonometry within the context of the Second World War was exceptional teaching and challenging learning at its very best.
- There is a strong link between CPD, performance management and the detailed school improvement plan. The performance management system is used well to identify targets, for example, in literacy and ICT. 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 infectious enthusiasm staff displayed in discussions was a fitting tribute to the high quality of training on offer and how the school goes the extra mile to help them grow professionally to become leaders of learning. Your commitment to encourage staff to gain further degree qualifications, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)/National Professional Qualifications for Headship (NPOHs)/NCSLs/Higher level teaching assistant accreditation (HLTA), and participate in other accredited CPD programmes is exemplary. Several spoke poignantly about how this financial and professional investment contributed significantly to their self esteem, well being and enjoyment at work.

- CPD plays an important role in staff retention. Staff turn over is low. Promotion and opportunities for career development are used effectively to retain good teachers and to provide them with new challenges. Many staff move onto promoted posts within school very quickly.
- 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 is rigorous and all the documentation is of a high quality. We agreed that during this transitional period it is important for the senior management team to review how it plans to collectively address the management requirements of the new school building and to develop appropriate CPD activities to support change effectively.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- review how the senior management team plans to collectively address the management requirements of the new building and develop a CPD plan to support change effectively.

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