

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 C Russell
Chief Executive
Mrs S Knight-Fotheringham
Head of College
White Cliffs Primary College for the Arts
St Radigund's Road
Dover
CT17 0LB

Dear Mr Russell and Mrs Knight-Fotheringham

Ofsted survey inspection programme – New models of school leadership: influences and outcomes

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 02 December 2008 to evaluate the impact of new models of leadership on school improvement.

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 the school improvement partner, governors, staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and a lesson observation.

The overall effectiveness of the model of leadership, a federation of three primary schools and a secondary school with one governing body, is outstanding.

The impact of the model of leadership on achievement and standards in the college is good.

- The federation and the staff of White Cliffs have transformed the climate for learning in the college so that students can achieve well. Students now have very positive attitudes to school, value learning and are proud of their achievements.
- Children join the college with skills well below those typically expected. They make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 to reach standards that are broadly in line with the national average. Progress in Key Stage 2, whilst good, has been slower. However, the

college is successfully tackling the underlying issues. The gap with national expectations is closing and the college's assessment information indicates students currently in Year 6 are on track to achieve their challenging targets in national tests.

- Good systems for tracking students' progress ensure underachievement is identified quickly and addressed by very effective, personalised interventions.

The impact of the model of leadership on the quality of teaching and learning in the college is outstanding.

- The federation has given a high priority to the development of teaching and learning. Very significant improvements are evident at White Cliffs. The innovative and robust system of monitoring is developing the expertise of teachers and study support managers, and promoting consistently high expectations.
- Teachers and support staff have a good understanding of National Curriculum levels and use assessment information well to plan learning that challenges students appropriately and builds successfully on previous learning.
- The collaboration of teachers and support staff across the federation has been very beneficial in spreading good practice. Highly effective joint professional development is extending teaching expertise. Students enjoy learning very much because lessons are exciting, frequently include practical activities and give opportunities for working collaboratively and independently.
- Students are given clear guidance for improvement and are becoming adept at evaluating their own work.

The impact of the model of leadership on the quality of the college's curriculum is good.

- The college's arts specialism is making a powerful contribution to enriching the curriculum and raising standards.
- The exchange of specialist teachers across the federation adds both breadth and depth to the curriculum at White Cliffs. Good schemes of work map the development of subject skills carefully and ensure students' learning experiences are coherent.
- Primary and secondary teachers are working together effectively to develop the continuity of the curriculum across the different phases of education.
- Resources for learning have been greatly improved and this is helping to motivate students.
- A much wider range of extra activities is making an important contribution to students' personal development.
- The college acknowledges there is more work to do in creating links between subjects and developing the leadership of foundation subjects.

The impact of the new model of leadership on the quality of leadership and management in the college is outstanding.

- The federation's philosophy that every member of the family of schools is a leader of learning permeates the ethos of White Cliffs and underpins the college's shared vision of success for every student. Staff's strong sense of being part of this common endeavour is driving the improvements in students' achievement and well-being.
- Leadership capacity has been greatly increased because the schools in the federation share their expertise and resources very effectively.
- The very genuine partnership between the schools is sustainable because it is based on equality and shared values. Central to those values is the development of positive relationships that provide both high levels of support and challenge.
- Teamwork is highly effective. Leadership is actively developed at all levels and distributed through teaching and non-teaching teams.
- Reviewed roles and responsibilities clarify staff's accountability for students' achievement.
- New and stronger systems are securing continuous improvement. For example, the management of data now facilitates the regular, rigorous analysis of students' achievement.
- Monitoring and evaluation are robust and leaders have a clear understanding of the college's growing strengths and areas for development.
- Governance provides the right level of challenge and support and is influential in setting the strategic direction of both the college and the federation.
- The inspirational and highly visible leadership of the chief executive of the federation and the head of the college gives confidence to staff, students and parents.
- Very good support from the local authority has helped the federation to establish itself quickly.
- Enhanced leadership capacity enables the college to be outward looking and instrumental in making an excellent contribution to the wider community through extended services.

The impact of the new model of leadership on inclusion in the college is outstanding.

- Well co-ordinated multi-agency work provides excellent support to students, especially those who are most vulnerable, and their families.
- Small classes, managed well by at least two adults, enable all students to make at least good progress because of the excellent one to one support.
- The high quality in class support means that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included in lessons.
- Partnership with parents has developed quickly. Communications are greatly improved and parents take advantage of the good access to the college and the services offered by the college's nurse, community police officer and social worker. The impact of services and improved relationships is evident in parents' strong support of the college and the improved attendance, achievement and well-being of students.
- Warm relationships combined with effective, consistent behaviour management give students a strong sense of belonging and contribute much to their moral and social development. Exclusions and incidents

of anti-social behaviour in the community have been significantly reduced.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extending creativity in the curriculum by linking subjects and developing the leadership of foundation subjects
- ensuring the momentum of students' excellent progress in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is sustained in Key Stage 2.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the leadership of your school and the federation.

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

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector