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Mr I and Mrs M Sneddon
Headteachers
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Dear Mr and Mrs Sneddon

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, pupils, parents and governors, 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 governors, staff, pupils, parents, a scrutiny of relevant documentation and a lesson observation.

The overall effectiveness of the model of leadership, a shared headship of a primary school, is outstanding.

The impact of the model of leadership on achievement and standards is outstanding.

- Contextualised attainment data for the years 2006-2008 demonstrate that standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 2 were significantly above average overall. Pupils join the school with skills and abilities that are lower than expected, so this represents outstanding progress.
- The comprehensive data collected by the school on the performance of Year 4 pupils show that those pupils who left the school in 2008 made outstanding progress and attained high standards.

- The consolidation and further development of pupils' phonic knowledge beyond the Early Years Foundation Stage is making a very positive impact on pupils' writing.
- The school's target setting arrangements are rigorous. Target levels are set termly in reading, writing and mathematics for individual pupils, and pupils' progress towards these targets is monitored very effectively.

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

- The parents interviewed were justifiably pleased with the quality of teaching throughout the school. The school monitors the quality of teaching and learning assiduously. These monitoring records present a picture of high quality teaching and learning which is reflected in pupils' outstanding progress over time.
- Features of outstanding teaching include: systematic development of pupils' phonic knowledge; a range of questioning strategies to fully involve pupils in their learning; contextualised tasks geared to pupils' needs and abilities; and well informed teaching assistants whose support was instrumental in pupils' high levels of progress.
- Pupils from Year 4 who were interviewed were very clear about their targets in English, and knew what they must do to improve their writing. They were less clear about their mathematics targets.

The impact of the model of leadership on the quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- All aspects of the curriculum are very effectively underpinned by the National Curriculum so pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in each subject are developed progressively, year on year, through thematic and discrete subject teaching.
- Each term, parents receive an excellent curriculum summary for each year group. They appreciate this information which supports them in helping their child at home.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about the new scheme for teaching phonics. One Year 4 child said, 'It really helps us with our spelling'.

The impact of the model of leadership on the quality of leadership and management throughout the school is outstanding.

- Parents and governors note that the period of change as the school moved from one headteacher to two co-headteachers was sensitively handled so that, over a short period of time, the two headteachers were established with equal standing. Pupils and parents are clear 'both are in charge'.
- There are very strong systems to maintain continuity of leadership. Underpinning these is the fact that one headteacher is in school for the whole of each week, although paid as an assistant head when his partner headteacher is in the building.
- Staff note that co-leaders give them 'double the impetus to improve'. Senior leaders below headship level have been instrumental in ensuring that the model of co-leadership is successful.

- Lesson observations by senior leaders maintain an excellent focus on what pupils are learning. Incisive written feedback is provided for staff. The achievement and standards of each class and cohort are kept under rigorous review by headteachers, and reflective scrutinies of pupils' work takes place regularly to check pupils' progress and moderate teachers' judgements about standards.
- Governors receive a good range of information about achievement and standards, but do not receive a regular summary on the quality of teaching and learning across the school so that they can judge if the present high quality is being maintained.
- Multi-agency support for each child is not readily accessible within the school. Consequently, co-ordinating support to meet pupils' diverse needs is more time consuming than it needs to be.

The impact of the model of leadership on inclusion is outstanding.

- The school ensures that teaching and the curriculum are adapted very effectively so that particular groups of pupils are able to learn in a style that matches their developmental stage.
- The school rigorously analyses data to check for differences in performance between boys and girls, pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It takes appropriate action to act on its findings.
- Senior leaders analyse the performance of each individual pupil but do not yet consider the overall performance over time of the small groups of minority ethnic pupils or children in care.
- When previously inspected, the school was asked to reduce absence. It has been successful in tackling this issue. Absence figures for the 2007/2008 reporting year were 5.6%. This is a reduction of one percentage point from the position at the end of the reporting year prior to the previous inspection.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- producing a simple, regular report to governors on teaching and learning, so they are able to judge the quality of the school's work in this area
- analysing the performance of the small groups of minority ethnic pupils and children in care in the same detail as for other groups
- working with the local authority, to develop, as resources allow, wider multi-agency support within school for pupils and families.

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

A copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be made available to the team who conduct your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Bradley Simmons
Her Majesty's Inspector