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Mr I Appleton  
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Dear Mr Appleton

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Workforce Reform: has it made a difference?

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visits on 30 January and 02 February 2009 to evaluate the impact of the deployment, training and development of the wider workforce. Although the visit was very helpful in providing evidence which will contribute to the survey, I was not able to reach a judgement on the provision as my visit was disrupted by adverse weather conditions. 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 observations made included discussions with learning support assistants, cover supervisors, behaviour coordinators, teachers and scrutiny of relevant documentation. Owing to the unforeseen closure of the school due to adverse weather conditions I was unable to speak to students or observe lessons.

The impact of the wider workforce on achievement and standards

- The work of members of the wider workforce has contributed to the rising trend in standards over the last three years. Since September, learning support assistants have been working with identified subjects and year groups, which has allowed for more targeted support for individuals and groups. They work in close partnership with teachers and now take a much greater role in assessing and tracking student progress.

- The behaviour coordinators have worked particularly well to reduce significantly the number of students removed from lessons.
- Committed and often innovative members of the wider workforce have worked very closely and successfully with many of the most vulnerable students to improve attendance and reduce the rate of exclusions. Well formulated and personalised support programmes have enabled students to complete both academic and vocational courses and move on to further education and employment.

#### The impact of the wider workforce on the quality of teaching and learning

- The members of support staff who were interviewed were able to explain the range of appropriate strategies they used to make learning enjoyable and successful. In particular there was a fitting emphasis on the use of 'hands on' approaches, team building exercises and regular use of information and communication technology (ICT) to develop students' interpersonal and work based skills.
- Cover supervisors have a clear understanding of what makes good teaching and learning and are sharply focused on student progress. They reflect self-critically on their own teaching and have, as a group, suitably adapted the school's lesson observation criteria to suit the requirements of their role.
- Learning support assistants are taking increasing responsibility for teaching groups of students both as part of timetabled intervention programmes and now more regularly within departments. One higher level teaching assistant is currently working effectively in the mathematics department. The subject leader reports that as a result more targeted interventions and booster sessions are provided for students of different abilities.

#### The impact of the wider workforce on the quality of the curriculum

- Learning support assistants and higher level teaching assistants contribute well to the curriculum, particularly that organised for students in danger of significant underachievement, through well-devised programmes such as 'Back on Track', 'The Prince's Trust XL Club' and emotional literacy support. The learning support assistants who lead these interventions are skilled in their assessment of students' needs, plan appropriate and interesting work and track students' progress carefully. They make effective use of outside agencies and have forged very productive community links.
- Where cover supervisors and departmental learning support assistants have worked for extended periods with particular departments, such as art and design, they develop greater subject knowledge which enables a more sustained impact on the curriculum.

#### Leadership and management of the wider workforce

- You and your senior leaders have a clear commitment to developing the wider workforce. Members of the wider workforce, such as the director of specialism, the examinations officer and the chief cover supervisor, are taking significant managerial responsibility.
- Members of the wider workforce benefit consistently from well devised induction and training and are subject to appropriate performance management arrangements. Many of the staff interviewed spoke positively

of the opportunities they had received to develop their expertise and confidence as well as the support they receive from line managers. A particular strength of the school is its willingness to develop individual members of staff who often progress to more demanding roles.

- The school accounts well for the value for money of the reformed workforce in terms of reducing teacher workload, improved outcomes for students and saving money. Significant savings have been made as a result of employing cover supervisors and examination invigilators, allowing for greater investment into areas such as professional and curriculum development.
- The school is evaluative and has accurately analysed the impact of much of its reformed workforce provision. However, this self-evaluation is not yet systematic enough to provide a cohesive overall picture.

#### The impact of the wider workforce on inclusion

- The school is committed to improving the life chances of students. Members of the wider workforce have made a significant contribution to inclusion. The programmes they lead and the support they provide are very well targeted to meet the needs of the most vulnerable students and these have had a positive impact on outcomes, most significantly in terms of improving attendance and reducing exclusions.

#### Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- deploy members of the wider workforce to support a wider range of students, particularly through developing the role of the departmental learning support assistant
- ensure that the school's self-evaluation of the impact of the wider workforce is more systematic.

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

Chris Wood  
Her Majesty's Inspector