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Mrs C Myers  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Myers

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 13 February 2009 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 and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the model of leadership, a federation of Bishop Challoner Catholic Collegiate Girls' School, which includes a mixed Sixth Form, with a secondary Catholic boys' school, is outstanding.

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

- Federation has had a positive impact on students' achievement. GCSE results for 2008 show considerable improvement. Standards are improving year on year and are broadly average overall. Taking account of students' starting points, this represents very good progress.
- Over the last two years there has been a significant improvement in the number of students attaining five higher-grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics. The percentage is now in line with the national average. However, the school has rightly identified the need to further improve students' functional English skills.

- Over the past three years the number of students in the sixth form has increased significantly and there has been very good improvement in examination results.
- Students undertaking vocational courses achieve very well in a good range of subjects, all of which are well-matched to their needs.

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

- Teaching and learning are good overall and there is much that is outstanding.
- Teachers' methodology encompasses a wide range of strategies, including the effective use of the most up to date technology.
- Very thorough, regular assessments ensure lessons are matched closely to students' needs.
- Staff have good opportunities to draw upon the skills of their colleagues within the federation. The federation's faculty heads provide very clear guidance to staff and there is a determination to improve practice further.
- The subject knowledge of teachers and other staff improve because of a well-thought out programme of professional development that is evaluated rigorously.
- Students really enjoy learning and do well because they say the staff make lessons interesting. The excellent relationships between staff and students contribute very significantly to the positive learning environment.
- The federation's systems for tracking and monitoring students' progress ensure the early identification of any underachievement.

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

- The federation provides a good range of academic and vocational opportunities for students. The ongoing review of the curriculum ensures it is responsive to the needs and interests of students.
- In addition to its very good humanities provision, for which the school has specialist status, there are excellent opportunities for students to develop their musical and dramatic talents. The confidence and self-esteem of students is raised alongside their performance skills.
- The curriculum is brought to life for the students through a wonderful range of visits, visitors and activities. For example, public speaking competitions, science competitions and enrichment courses in physics at universities and visits to Barcelona, Berlin and Auschwitz.
- The college has excellent links with feeder primary schools with many visiting to take part in sporting activities and classes for the gifted and talented.
- The leadership has developed very strong links with local businesses which provide significant enhancement to the curriculum.
- The information, communication and technology (ICT) provision across the federation is excellent and supports students' learning very well.

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

- The federation's leadership and management structures successfully take account of the needs of the component schools.
- The leadership has ensured a relentless drive towards improvement in both academic standards and the quality of facilities.
- The excellent strategic leadership provided by the senior management team is based on a deep understanding of the local context and the strengths and areas for development within the federation.
- Very effective delegation has ensured senior and middle managers are provided with opportunities to develop their leadership and management skills by working across the federation.
- Teaching and learning continue to improve because of effective monitoring and evaluation.
- Leadership is forward thinking and determined to enhance the federation's capacity through developing partnerships and networking beyond its own boundaries. The concept of the 'Learning Village' with a 'Village Club' on campus, is a good example of this outward looking approach.
- The governing body is very supportive and challenging. It works effectively to continually improve the provision.

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

- The diverse cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds are celebrated and enrich students' experiences.
- There is a very strong 'can do' philosophy which is focused on raising standards and improving the achievement of all students across the federation.
- Teaching assistants are provided with a good programme of professional development to enable them to contribute effectively to the students' progress.
- The development of excellent assessment and tracking systems across the federation ensure gifted and talented, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at risk of underachievement are provided with guidance and support to reach their potential.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- accelerating the development of students' functional English skills, particularly those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

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

Paul Edwards  
Additional Inspector