

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



10 February 2009

Miss B Wilkin
Headteacher
Horden Nursery School
Cotsford Park
Horden
Peterlee
County Durham
SR8 4TB

Dear Miss Wilkin

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

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 29 January 2009 to evaluate the impact of the deployment, training and development of the wider workforce. 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 judgements made included observations of the school at work indoors and outdoors, discussions with nursery nurses, teachers, the school secretary, parents and children, and scrutiny of relevant documentation.

The overall effectiveness of the wider workforce in your school was judged to be outstanding.

The impact of the wider workforce on achievement and standards is outstanding.

- Nursery nurses have a significant impact on achievement. Children make very fast progress from their starting points allowing them often to reach points of development which are above age-related expectations. Nursery nurses work in very close partnership with teachers taking a full part in assessing, planning and leading exciting and challenging activities every day which extend exceptionally well each child's thinking and skills.
- As a further result of this excellent work, children are highly motivated and develop long concentration spans as well as becoming independent

learners. Their independent use of all resources, including computers, is exceptional. All their time is spent purposefully.

- The high ratio of staff to children ensures significant time for each child to talk with adults and have supported discussions with each other. This brings many benefits, one of which is that children develop their listening skills very well. Good manners, with mutual respect and friendship, are very successfully and consistently promoted by all staff.
- The rate of attendance is high. Parents say this is because the school is such an exciting place to be.

The impact of the wider workforce on the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- All teaching and learning led by nursery nurses I observed was outstanding. The staff concerned organised and supported the intended learning very well, modelling and reinforcing good use of language, enthusing the children and sensitively ensuring they understood the activities at all stages.
- Really exciting and engaging activities organised by nursery nurses such as role play, a dragon hunt, the jelly tray, a phonics session and excellent discussions about learning at the snack table, were all highly effective and carefully structured to enable children to learn very quickly and actively.
- Little evidence was seen of staff intervening too much in activities; this indicates a further improvement since the last outstanding inspection.

The impact of the wider workforce on the quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- Nursery nurses make excellent contributions to the accurate assessment of children. This leads to activities being planned by all staff which closely meet the children's needs, as well as ensuring all children receive a strong core entitlement across all areas of learning.
- The quality and range of activities offered to children over time is fantastic. There is just the right balance between choice for children and direction. All staff are very clear which activities they will lead each day and what the intended learning is; this makes the school run like clockwork.
- Parents were very clear about the positive impact the curriculum has on their children's learning and behaviour and how well the school shares what they are doing with them through meetings, excellent learning displays, individual 'learning journeys' and informally. Parents are not really aware which staff are teachers and which are nursery nurses; they can approach anyone with confidence. Two nursery nurses lead very effectively an important strand of the school's work in meeting parents before their children start the school. All staff are quick to share with parents how they can use everyday events, such as a visit to the park or a shop, to promote enjoyable learning.

The leadership and management of the wider workforce are outstanding.

- Behind all the school's success is your inspiring, visionary and practically based leadership which commands huge respect. You have enabled all staff equally, whether teachers or members of the wider workforce, to play an excellent part in the success of this notable school.

- Teachers play a key role in supporting the work of nursery nurses but the relationship is definitely 'first amongst equals'; this school is a highly effective partnership.
- Performance management arrangements are well established and highly effective for all staff, although the written policy does not fully reflect this excellent practice as some parts refer only to teachers. Targets for nursery nurses do not include any directly related to children's progress which we agreed could be considered further.
- Administrative staff support your work very well, enabling you to focus on your core tasks.

The impact of the wider workforce on inclusion is outstanding.

- This is a highly inclusive school, in which all children are highly valued, catered for as individuals, and make excellent progress as learners at the start of their educational career.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- consider changing the performance management policy so that it fully describes the excellent practice and consider how targets for children's progress might be included in the targets for nursery nurses.

This improvement area is about building on an area of existing strength, not redressing a weakness or any failure to meet a requirement.

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

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector