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Dr R Sykes
Headteacher
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Dear Dr Sykes

Ofsted survey: good practice in the development of leadership skills and effectiveness

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 27 April 2009 to look at the work that you are doing to develop and sustain high quality leadership in your school and your partner school.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussions with a range of staff and with students; scrutiny of documentation; a number of lesson observations. In addition, evidence was also used from my visit on 28 April to your partner school.

Features of good practice observed

- The school's work to develop the skills and effectiveness of leaders is outstanding. You set a strong and clear direction for this work.
- Leaders at different levels appreciate the high standards of leadership in the school and they work hard to aspire to them.
- Middle leaders are provided with excellent support to enable them to develop their effectiveness and leadership skills. In particular, senior leaders help them to prioritise and plan their actions very carefully.
- The school's performance management system is excellent. It is clear, comprehensive and very well organised. This helps senior leaders to identify the development needs of staff new to leadership and those aspiring to leadership positions.

- You have set a very clear direction and tone for your school's work with its partner school. This relationship has been handled with sensitivity, ensuring a productive and useful partnership between the two schools. The work of middle and senior leaders with their colleagues in the partner school is very effective. As well as supporting the partner school's improvement, it has also enabled leaders at Thornden to reflect on their own practice.

Areas for development

- Implement plans to use the detailed analysis of staff development needs to provide further, focussed leadership training and development opportunities.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop your work in this area.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Russell
Her Majesty's Inspector