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Mrs Holman
Headteacher
Bishop Stopford School
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Dear Mrs Holman

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 3 June 2009 to look at the work that you are doing to develop and sustain high quality leadership in your school and your partner schools.

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 2 June 2009 to one of your partner schools.

Features of good practice observed

- The school's work to develop the skills and effectiveness of leaders is outstanding. You and your staff have very good knowledge and understanding of educational leadership and its application to promote positive outcomes for students.
- Staff at many levels speak highly of the time invested in their development and the support provided by senior leaders. This is also recognised by staff at your partner schools who view the partnership as professionals learning from each other.
- Programmes to develop leaders are well thought out following careful reflection. These plans include a range of opportunities for staff across your partner schools to gain accreditation towards postgraduate degrees.

Colleagues value these programmes because they are linked to and have direct impact on their work. For example, the development of middle leaders.

- Key strengths of your programme of work include the clear focus for development identified by the steering committee and the proactive involvement of governors.
- Formal professional development opportunities such as time limited responsibility positions and the work of the innovators' group ensure staff feel valued; have opportunities to develop leadership skills; and have their work informed by educational research.
- The innovative coaching programme provides staff with space to reflect on professional issues and devise solutions themselves.

Area for development:

- staff value the opportunity to discuss career pathways with senior leaders. However, a systematic programme for aspiring senior leaders has not yet been developed.

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

Asyia Kazmi
Her Majesty's Inspector