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Mr A Shaw
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Shaw

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 September 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. 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 a range of staff and with students; scrutiny of documentation; and a learning walk. In addition, evidence was also used from my visit on 17 September to your partner school.

Features of good practice observed

- The school's work to develop the skills and effectiveness of leaders is outstanding. All members of the school community have high expectations of the pupils.
- Central to the school's success is the highly effective use of challenging targets to develop a shared vision, underpinned by a firm belief that all can succeed.
- You ensure exceptional value for money by making excellent use of non-teaching staff.

- The use of rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures maximises the impact of carefully chosen priorities for development. It enables the school to deal quickly with any practice that does not guarantee positive outcomes for students.
- High levels of accountability have created healthy competition, with all leaders striving to improve on previous best performance. Although subject leaders want to be the most successful, they recognise that collaboration is important to maintain the school's position among the top performing schools nationally.
- An important feature of the school is the considerable discretion given to leaders. This freedom is balanced by an extremely rigorous approach to accountability, that focuses on ensuring that all students achieve their targets.
- The support you provide for others has benefited your own school and those receiving the additional help. Leaders, including some who are not teachers, have grown in confidence through being involved in advisory work. Your partner school confirmed that this had contributed to the accelerated rate of improvement made by its pupils
- Collaborative work with other providers is increasingly becoming the main means of promoting professional development. Of particular note are the opportunities made available through federation with a primary school on the same campus. Staff in both schools spoke of the important insights that they have gained through this cross-phase work.
- The involvement in national training for bursars is helping leaders to focus more on the outcomes for learners.
- Governors play their part by ensuring that the school has a clear strategic direction that enables all leaders to flourish.

Areas for development

- Although students have a wide range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills, there is scope for their further involvement in supporting the evaluation of learning in the school.

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

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector