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20 July 2010

Ms S Scrimshaw  
Headteacher  
Halton Community Combined School  
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Dear Ms Scrimshaw

**Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: the quality and impact of partnership provision in schools for children in service families**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 6 and 7 July 2010 to look at the school's contribution to the quality of provision and partnerships for children and young people who are in families of service personnel.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of partnerships, including the quality of the partnerships between schools and agencies and between schools and parents, I looked at how effective the partnerships are in improving children and young people's personal wellbeing and learning. I also considered the nature of the support given to these children, including those in the most vulnerable circumstances, or those who have a particular special educational need or disability, and the arrangements to ensure the continuity of provision during children's move in and out of your 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 included: meetings with school staff, pupils and parents, a squadron leader from the Command and a representative from SSAFA at RAF Halton; a meeting with the Chair of Governors; discussions with the headteacher of another local primary school being supported by the mobility coordinator and, a senior educational psychologist from Buckinghamshire County Council; and a review of school's documentation and pupils' work.

The school's contribution to the quality of provision and partnerships for children and young people who are in families of service personnel is outstanding.

## Key features

- The entire staff team is fully committed to the inclusion of service pupils. The warm welcome that families receive ensures that new pupils settle quickly and that their parents soon develop confidence in the school. Satisfaction at all levels is very high.
- The movement of service children in and out of the school is managed exceptionally well and underpinned by the school's Transition and Induction policies. The school efficiently follows up any records for pupils who arrive with little or no information from their previous schools. Pupils are prepared well for future changes.
- Thorough safeguarding policies and procedures ensure that no pupil remains unidentified in terms of their vulnerability as a result of their mobility. Halton staff have established strong partnerships with professionals and other schools, ensuring that essential information is shared, particularly for pupils who are considered to be the most vulnerable.
- The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) deals proactively with any pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and involves the local authority swiftly in assessing and identifying the most appropriate support. Provision mapping is thorough and ensures service pupils' needs are met in good time.
- The school liaises closely with Buckinghamshire Educational Psychology Department which helps to meet the needs of those pupils affected by a range of factors, including the consequences of high mobility and out-of-area detachments. The school also responds well to pupils experiencing out-of-area detachments by ensuring they maintain regular communication with absent family members. This provides real comfort and reassurance to many pupils.
- Governance of the school is fully supportive of the needs of service children and their families. It has been instrumental in setting up a local support group to include other schools with high percentages of service children and for securing additional local authority funding.
- The school has developed a project in which a Mobility Coordinator post has been established as a liaison between school and service families. This role is highly effective, as is confirmed by parents, pupils, school staff and civilian and military professionals. The Mobility Coordinator is making a real difference to the lives of service families and to the extended school community. She provides both practical and emotional support very sensitively and manages her caseload skilfully, aided by her unique educational background and military knowledge.
- Outcomes for service children are evaluated thoroughly and indicate that they are responding well to the suite of interventions and support which is part of their entitlement at Halton. Attendance, behaviour and attainment are all improving.

- The school has identified many barriers to pupils' progress. Staff recognise how difficult it is for some parents to acknowledge when their child is experiencing problems, or if there are problems at home which might affect their progress. Therefore, all work hard at developing strong relationships with parents and carers.
- The school is keen to learn from its mistakes and acknowledges that it has not always been successful in dealing with every family circumstance as efficiently as it could. However, steps are taken to resolve this and ensure that staff development is strategically planned to account for any eventualities that may occur.
- Staff continue to refine the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of service pupils as well as it does for others. This requires thorough consultation with pupils when they arrive to prevent unnecessary repetition. The school is keen to develop a suitable recording system to enable this across all schools and works tirelessly at sharing curriculum information with parents, acknowledging there is more to do here.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop the work with children and young people and their parents who are in families of service personnel.

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

Yours sincerely

**Jane Melbourne**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**