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Mrs D Coslett  
Mr N Blackburn  
Co-Headteachers  
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Dear Mrs Coslett and Mr Blackburn

Ofsted survey inspection programme – New models of school leadership: influences and outcomes

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 13 January 2009 to evaluate the impact of new models of leadership on school improvement.

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 discussions with a representative from the local authority, governors, staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and lesson observations.

The overall effectiveness of the model of leadership, co-leadership of a school operating within a loose federation with an additional, formal collaboration with one other school, is outstanding.

The impact of the model of leadership on achievement and standards is outstanding.

- Students' achievement and well-being is central to the supportive ethos of the school and improvement planning. Consequently, students make excellent progress overall from Key Stage 2 to 4 and good progress in the sixth form. They have positive attitudes to school, value learning and are proud of their achievements.
- Comprehensive systems for tracking students' progress ensure underachievement is identified quickly and addressed by effective, personalised interventions.

- Teachers and support staff know students very well and most use assessment information proficiently to evaluate students' progress and clarify what they must do next to improve.

The impact of the model of leadership on the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- Systems for monitoring teaching and learning are robust and strongly focused on continuous improvement. The annual review of the work of every subject team is sharpening self-evaluation at all levels.
- The expectation that the quality of teaching can always be improved is embraced by all teachers and support staff. Teachers feel very well supported in this common enterprise and have very good opportunities to share effective practice.
- The school promotes methods of teaching that develop learners' independence and recognises that this is an ongoing priority.
- Collaboration with other schools is very beneficial in disseminating good practice and challenging teachers and support staff to be reflective about methods and try out new approaches.
- Teachers and support staff work together skilfully to ensure that students are successful learners.
- The additional capacity created by the leadership model allows senior leaders to dedicate a significant amount of time to teaching. This is advantageous in that leaders model high expectations whilst developing a detailed understanding of what is involved in maintaining the high quality of teaching.
- Advanced skills teachers make an excellent contribution to the development of teaching and learning within the school and through their work with partner schools.

The impact of the model of leadership on the quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The school reviews its excellent curriculum regularly to ensure that it is responsive to the changing needs of students. Partnership with other schools and the local college widens students' choice of courses and gives much greater scope for tailoring provision to the requirements of individuals. The school is ambitious to build on work with partners to further enhance 14-19 provision within the area.
- The school's specialisms greatly enrich the curriculum and deepen students' engagement with learning.
- Extra-curricular activities contribute powerfully to students' personal development. In particular, the subject leadership award courses develop students' self confidence, social skills and commitment to life-long learning.

The impact of the new model of leadership on the quality of leadership and management throughout the school is outstanding.

- There is a clear, shared vision which motivates all staff and drives continuous improvement.

- The model of leadership enables the school to be outward looking and effective in working with other institutions to secure improvement. This is further enhanced by the fact that the co-headteachers are National Leaders of Education and the school is a National Support School. Leaders have excellent opportunities to take responsibility for projects within the loose federation and other partnerships. This has the effect of revitalising and developing leadership within the school. It also contributes to the retention of staff, and, thereby, the continuity of leadership.
- Leadership skills are actively and equally cultivated within teaching and support teams. There are very good opportunities for staff development, clearly linked to school and individual priorities.
- Highly effective line management arrangements ensure staff feel valued, well supported and confident about their responsibilities.
- The model of leadership has significantly increased the school's capacity to improve and make an excellent contribution to community cohesion.
- The strength of governors' strategic vision is evident in their commitment to developing effective leadership within and beyond the school and their tenacious guardianship of the best interests of students.

The impact of the new model of leadership on inclusion is outstanding.

- The open culture of the school ensures high levels of participation and inclusion in decision-making. For example, students participate alongside staff in a working group focusing on the development of teaching and learning.
- The excellent quality of relationships underpins the strong feeling of belonging amongst staff and students. Both are secure in feeling valued and being clear about expectations.
- Above average attendance and reducing exclusions reflect the school's strong commitment to inclusion.
- Effective early intervention, including specialist teaching, prevents problems becoming established as barriers to learning.
- Well co-ordinated multi-agency work contributes to the very good care and support for individual students.
- Through its strong partnerships, including the partnership between the co-headteachers, the school successfully unlocks resources which enable it to be highly effective in meeting Every Child Matters objectives.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to develop students' capacity to learn independently
- building on partnerships to further support the development of 14-19 provision within the area.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the leadership of your school and the federation.

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

Jacqueline White  
Her Majesty's Inspector