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10 February 2011

Mrs L Vyas
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Dear Mrs Vyas

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: leadership of more than one school

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 18 and 19 January 2011 to look at the leadership of the federation.

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: interviews with senior leaders, middle leaders, governors, staff, parents, local authority representatives and pupils; and the scrutiny of relevant documentation.

The effectiveness of the federation leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement is outstanding.

Context

In May 2007 the governing bodies of Ladybarn Primary School and Green End Primary School agreed to collaborative working by the formation of a soft federation. You were appointed as executive headteacher of both schools, at first on a temporary base, then permanently in July 2008. At the inception of the federation, Green End School was in special measures and Ladybarn School was graded as a good school. The most recent Ofsted inspections have graded Green End School as a good school with outstanding features and Ladybarn School as an outstanding school. Currently, a proposal to move to a hard federation on 5 April 2011 is under discussion. Both schools have well above average cohorts of pupils on free school meals.

Outcomes

- From exceptionally low starting points, pupils make good progress in both schools by the end of Key Stage 2. Attainment is satisfactory but steadily improving. This represents a transformational change for Green End School. For example, in 2010 at Key Stage 2, 100% of pupils made at least two levels of progress in English. In 2006, 52% of pupils attained English Level 4 or higher, compared with a rate of 81% in 2010. Good pupil progress has been maintained at Ladybarn School. At both schools, pupils with English as an additional language make good progress with some making exceptional progress. The school acknowledges the need to further raise the attainment of White boys on free school meals.
- Behaviour in both schools is at least good, which also represents a major change at Green End School. The formation and consistent application of the federation's behaviour management policies and high expectations have made a great impact on pupils' attitudes. Pupils have responded enthusiastically to the federation's very strong emphasis on developing oracy and literacy skills. It is common to hear pupils say that they 'love reading'. One Green End School parent observed that from 'never reading', her son now insists on 'reading to her every day'. An excitement for learning reverberates throughout both schools.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average at both schools which represents a significant and sustained improvement over a three-year period. As a result of targeted federation initiatives, the attendance of pupils on free schools meals has increased significantly and is above the national average for that group.

Provision

- The quality of teaching in both schools is at least good. A federation emphasis on pupils' active engagement in lessons has increased opportunities for learning and motivation. Pupils respond with enthusiasm. There is a strong focus on improvement, the sharing of best practice and joint working across the federation that has benefited both schools.
- The federation has enabled many joint projects and events that have enriched the curriculum of both schools. Links between teachers in each school have been used well to devise activities that are more relevant and interesting for pupils. Pupils in both schools have benefited from joint working such as in the diversity project, the oracy and literacy focus, the pupils' leadership scheme and many sports and cultural links. Impressively, pupils are able to talk clearly about these activities as 'federation' projects and events and about the new friendships and benefits that they have brought.
- The quality of care, guidance and support in both schools is outstanding. The federation has been a major spur to the development of community links to enable the greater cooperation and involvement of parents.

Leadership and management

- You provide outstanding leadership. Within a relatively short period you have transformed Green End School from a failing school to one that is now recognised as good with outstanding features. Teachers, pupils and parents talk enthusiastically about the impact and 'sheer joy' of this transformation. In part, it was achieved through highly focused improvement strategies coupled with a robust emphasis on strengthening teaching and learning and positive pupil engagement. You have been supported throughout by highly able deputies, middle managers and staff.
- The experienced governing bodies of both schools provided a clear direction for the federation and have worked together very well. Strategic planning is underpinned by discrete plans for each school focusing on their specific needs. It takes good account of the use of resources.
- Staff morale is very high and both schools are seen as equal partners within the evolving federation structure. Expectations of what can be achieved by all pupils have been raised, demonstrated by the comment of one pupil who reported that 'no one is back stage here, we are all leaders'. Potential barriers to successful federation, such as the initial concerns of some staff and parents, were successfully and quickly allayed through extensive consultation and the successful outcomes of change, particularly at Green End School.
- Good communication ensures that staff, governors and parents are well informed about developments in the federation. The use of both schools for parents' courses has created greater opportunities for parents to learn how they can help with their children's learning. Many parents now attend courses at both schools, further cementing and developing community relations.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the attainment of White boys on free school meals at both schools.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector