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Mr D Linsell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Linsell

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 November 2008 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 a lesson observation.

The overall effectiveness of the model of leadership, the creation of distinct learning communities within the school combined with participation in a federation of local providers offering 14-19 courses, is good.

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

- The development of five learning communities within the school has increased capacity to focus on the achievement and well-being of individual students.
- Good systems for tracking students' progress ensure that underachievement is identified quickly and tackled with appropriate interventions. Consequently, students make good progress between Key Stage 2 and 4 and standards at the end of Year 11 are rising rapidly.
- Teachers' understanding of National Curriculum levels is being developed successfully; most evaluate students' progress accurately and give clear guidance for improvement.

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

- Students' capacity to learn independently is being increased by a sharp focus on developing learning skills and extending teaching methodology to cater for a range of learning styles.
- Students say they are motivated by the improved variety of lesson activities.
- The systematic observation of lessons by middle and senior leaders, and opportunities for teachers to observe each other are improving teaching.
- The advanced skills team of teachers is making a good contribution to the development of teaching expertise.

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

- The wider choice of subjects in Key Stage 4 is helping to maintain students' interest in learning and increasing their chances of examination success.
- The 14-19 federation has been successful in tailoring the curriculum to local circumstances. It has been very effective in increasing Level 2 provision and the number of students involved in further and higher education. The number not in education, employment or training in the locality served by the federation has been significantly reduced.
- The school's specialism in performing arts is making a very good contribution to raising standards and promoting community cohesion.

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

- New and stronger systems are driving improvement. For example, the management of data now facilitates a rigorous analysis of students' achievement. However, there is more to do in ensuring that systems are used effectively by all staff.
- Monitoring and evaluation are robust and clearly focused on improving students' achievement.
- Leadership is actively developed at all levels. The creation of the five learning communities has been instrumental in distributing leadership throughout teaching and non-teaching teams.
- Good opportunities for continuous professional development are clearly linked to school priorities and the individual needs of staff.
- Communications have been improved as a result of the implementation of the learning communities and the 14-19 federation. Strong partnerships, including the partnership with parents, are being established in support of students' learning.
- Enhanced leadership capacity enables the school to be outward looking and instrumental in making an excellent contribution to the wider community. For example, you provide strong strategic leadership to the 14-19 federation.

- The local authority has provided good support to the school and the 14-19 federation.

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

- Well co-ordinated multi-agency work provides good support to students, especially those who are vulnerable.
- The Turn Around Centre is helping to reduce exclusions and sustain students' engagement with learning.
- The 14-19 federation is successful in motivating disaffected students and is helping to close the gap between outcomes for most students and those who are vulnerable.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that new systems are implemented consistently across the school.

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