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Ms M Maslin  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Maslin

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, pupils, parents and governors, during my visit with Joanna Beckford-Hall HMI 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 governors, staff, pupils, parents, a scrutiny of relevant documentation and a lesson observation.

The federation of two primary schools with a joint headteacher and governing body has been in place since January 2008. The overall effectiveness of the model of leadership is satisfactory.

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

- Validated data for Punnetts Town demonstrate that, over the past few years, pupils have attained standards that are generally in line with national averages by the time they leave the school. When pupils' attainment on entry to the school is considered, this represents broadly satisfactory progress. However, within this picture, the attainment of higher ability pupils in writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 has been low and there is some evidence that target setting for pupils within Key Stage 2 lacks ambition.

- At Broad Oak, the use of sharp targets and focused assessment has contributed to the good progress pupils make during their time at the school. As a result, pupils attain better than average standards by the time they leave Year 6.
- Pupils at Punnetts Town have a firm grasp of their individual targets for improving their work. During this visit, Broad Oak pupils were less secure in their understanding of such targets.
- At both schools, parents reported that they are pleased with the high quality of information they are currently receiving with regard to their children's progress and attainment.
- The federation is having a positive impact on pupils' social skills in both schools. Pupils at Punnetts Town feel that they have a strong voice in the running of the school. They participate in weekly school council meetings. Pupils at both schools appreciate your 'open-door' policy.

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

- The federation has increased the number of opportunities for staff to engage in professional dialogue at joint in-service training and staff meetings. Both staffs noted the positive impact of this dialogue on their own planning and teaching.
- At Punnetts Town, teaching has improved because of a sharp focus on the information given to pupils about their learning, and the way this information is used by teachers and pupils to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Although teaching and learning has been kept informally under review at both schools, there are as yet no formal monitoring records, so governors are not able to hold the school to account for the pace at which teaching is improving.
- The quality of marking seen in the English exercise books of Year 6 pupils at Punnetts Town was strong. It addresses both lesson objectives and pupils' personal targets. Pupils commented on how useful they found the marking.

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

- You and the governors have wisely created a post of responsibility for curriculum across both schools. This appointment is proving key in ensuring that the curricula at both schools are developed to meet the needs of pupils and capitalise on new technology.
- At both schools, pupils are enjoying and benefiting from joint thematic learning days and sporting activities. Pupils in Year 6 have used email links effectively to disseminate and evaluate topic work they have undertaken in both schools.
- Pupils at Punnetts Town relish the developing opportunities for practical learning which they say are enhancing their understanding of new concepts and the development of new skills.
- At Punnetts Town, staff have sensibly begun to map the key skills and understanding from the National Curriculum that they intend pupils will

progressively develop from each topic as they move through the school.

- Pupils at both schools are enjoying a wider range of extra-curricular opportunities on both sites.

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

- You are providing highly focused leadership during the early stages of this federation. You have made good provision in a short space of time with the aim ensuring that outcomes across the federation continue to improve. You are ensuring that both schools work in genuine partnership to build on their strengths and tackle weaker areas.
- As a result of judicious appointments and mentoring of existing staff, both schools are demonstrating a clear capacity for improvement.
- Leadership is increasingly well distributed across both schools. One teacher commented that, as a result, staff feel empowered to innovate and take wider responsibility and are thus enjoying their professional life more. Such a comment augurs well for succession planning.
- This federation was well planned. The joint governing body has retained a core of committed and hardworking governors from the predecessor arrangements who contribute much to the life of the school.
- The school improvement plan addresses the Every Child Matters agenda and is well prioritised. However, monitoring and evaluation strategies and resource implications have yet to be included within the plan.
- You have been wise to ensure that both deputies have a leading teaching role, yet receive appropriate leadership time to tackle specific school improvement priorities when required.

The impact of the model of leadership on inclusion is satisfactory.

- The impact of the special educational needs co-ordinator's strategic work across both schools is underpinning the increasingly effective use of resources to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- The small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups at Punnetts Town are making progress in line with their peers. However, in common with their classmates, they would benefit from more ambitious targets, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- raising expectations of pupils' year on year performance at Punnetts Town by setting, and pursuing, more challenging targets
- producing formal monitoring records for teaching and learning, so governors are able to hold the school to account for the pace at which teaching is improving

- ensuring that curriculum planning and mapping is underpinned by the key skills, concepts and understanding required by the National Curriculum
- including monitoring and evaluation strategies and resource implications within school improvement planning.

I hope these observations are useful to you as you continue to develop both schools.

A copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be made available to the team who conduct your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Bradley Simmons  
Her Majesty's Inspector