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Mr I Hobson
Executive Principal
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Dear Mr Hobson

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 04 December 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 and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of teacher and student activities.

The overall effectiveness of the model of leadership, a federation with another secondary modern school, is good.

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

- Overall, standards are broadly average at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. Given their starting points, students make good progress throughout the college. The partnership now demonstrates some of the best improvement seen within the local authority.
- The test and examination results for 2008 confirm the improvement in recent years has been maintained. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of students gaining A* to G passes is better than seen nationally. The proportion of students attaining five higher-grade passes improved significantly, exceeding the challenging targets that had been set. The proportion of students including English and mathematics in their

higher grade passes continues to increase but the college rightly acknowledges there is scope for further improvement.

- Students develop particularly good information and technology skills because of the outstanding provision and a well-focused curriculum.

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

- Teaching and learning are good overall and there is evidence of outstanding practice. Teaching is improving across the federation because expectations have been raised.
- Students are provided with an excellent learning environment where teachers' use of interactive whiteboards makes activities more stimulating and interesting.
- Leaders' comprehensive understanding of students' progress informs the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Very good relationships between staff and students contribute significantly to the positive learning environment.

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

- The federation has contributed to the enhancement of provision. There has been a successful focus on improving the curriculum for English and mathematics and a good impact on enhancing the wider curriculum.
- An innovative approach to timetabling gives more flexibility to meet the needs of students.
- The one-to-one availability of computers ensures all students have the best possible access to technology to aid their work.
- The federation has increased the choice of 14-19 pathways. All students follow a vocational course in addition to their academic curriculum.
- The leadership has made excellent use of the facilities to ensure provision keeps pace with the changing demands of today's world. Fitness suites, a music room and first rate technology contribute to a learning environment that promotes enjoyment and productivity.

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

- The outstanding strategic leadership provided by the executive principal and federation Performance team ensures there is a very clear understanding of where and how further improvements can be made.
- Leadership and management across the federation have been expanded effectively to take account of the needs of each school.
- The skills of subject leaders are channelled well, across the federation, to accelerate students' progress and improve standards.
- The federation has been effective in its determined drive to eradicate unsatisfactory teaching and ensure there is more that is good.

- The leadership has been successful in seeking out additional sources of funding to significantly improve the quality of staffing, accommodation and provision across the federation.
- The governing body holds the school to account and works extremely effectively with the senior leadership to drive up standards.

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

- There is a very clear focus on improving the achievement of all groups of students and raising standards across the federation.
- The federation supports students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities exceptionally well and, consequently, they make at least good progress.
- Reviewed and strengthened strategies are improving attendance and behaviour significantly at the partner school.
- The excellent links with the on-site special school enable students from both settings to significantly improve their social skills.
- Very good assessment and tracking systems ensure swift detection of any inequalities in achievement between different groups of learners.
- Regular meetings with students and parents are highly effective in identifying the next learning steps for students and reducing the risk of underachievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continue to raise standards further so that more students attain higher grades in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4.

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

Paul Edwards
Additional Inspector