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Dear Mr Whitcombe and Mr Box

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 our visit on 28 and 29 September 2010 to look at the leadership of the federation. Please pass on our thanks to the parents and governors that also gave up their time and made a valuable contribution to the visit.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to a national report. 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 agreement.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with 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.

Outcomes

- The federation has been in place now for only a short time and has had a rapid and impressive impact on outcomes for pupils. The specific impact of the federation varies between the three schools as each has a different starting point, different circumstances and maintains a distinct character.
- The federation has brought a great deal of stability to both Sutton and to King's Capse schools. This has ensured that achievement in Sutton school has improved rapidly and is now outstanding.
- King's Capse School has a record of strong achievement for pupils. The federation has enabled the school to build on this past success.
- The attainment and progress of groups of pupils and individuals have improved across the federation. Achievement in all schools is outstanding for the majority of pupils.
- The additional provision that the federation has facilitated has contributed well to the pupils' personal development.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is outstanding across the federation. They demonstrate constructive and positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils engage in learning opportunities readily and are able to work well in teams.
- Pupils' confidence and self-esteem have grown as they have been able to work with pupils from different schools across the federation and have broadened their outlook on life. As one pupil reported 'we are like a family in this school and now we are part of a bigger family.' This sentiment was shared by pupils, governors, parents and staff across the federation.

Provision

- The quality of teaching in the federation has improved across all schools as a result of sharing the expertise and experience of the teachers and support staff. Pupils were keen to tell inspectors how much they enjoyed their lessons. They attributed this to the high quality of teaching and the excellent relationships they had built with the teachers and teaching assistants.
- The professional development programme in the federation has resulted in a thorough system for assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress. This has ensured that lessons are well focused and challenging, matching the needs of individuals well.
- The welfare, care, health and safety of pupils are also more effective as a result of the federation. This is because the federation is able to draw on additional resources and efficiencies to respond well to the individual needs of the schools and pupils.

Leadership and management

- The strong, clear and decisive leadership demonstrated by the federation headteachers has fostered a strong sense of common purpose among all staff. This has resulted in a high level of commitment to the ambitious and successful development of each school.
- The wider leadership team are strong practitioners and actively look to future development both for teachers and leaders. They make an excellent contribution to the continuous professional development of all staff. For example, there is a strong commitment to action research, such as the dialogic mathematics, that has improved provision and outcomes for pupils across the federation.
- Staff and stakeholders demonstrate a high level of trust in the federation leadership. This results from clear communication to all stakeholders, and the importance placed on valuing skills and expertise of the staff within the federation schools. This has been an important feature in the smooth transition to federation.
- Leaders are able to offer greater flexibility when deploying staff between schools to support learning. This has been successful for temporary and permanent moves between the schools in the federation. The advantages of this are that pupils receive provision of a consistently high quality and staff have gained wider valuable insights and experience.

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 sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

