

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Ms L Faber
Headteacher
Birley Community Primary School
Hayfield Crescent
Birley
Sheffield
S12 4FX

Mrs S Woodcock
Headteacher
Birley Community College
Thornbridge Avenue
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S12 3AB

Dear Ms Faber and Mrs Woodcock

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 scrutiny of relevant documentation.

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

Outcomes

- Cross-phase strategies to raise pupils' achievement and attainment have been used effectively to accelerate the progress made by pupils in Years 5 and 6 during 2010. The 'Early Risers' programme implemented during the summer term of 2010 enabled gaps in learning to be tackled rigorously through a range of coordinated activities both at the primary school and community college. Consequently, pupils beginning Years 6 and 7 in September 2010 were closer to meeting the challenging attainment targets set by the federation.
- Good progress made by pupils at the community college has been sustained since the previous inspection. A sharp focus on raising attainment in mathematics across the federation has resulted in

considerable improvements to pupils' mathematical skills. Targeted strategies to extend the learning of more-able pupils has increased the levels of challenge and raised expectations about what they might achieve in the longer term.

- Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning have been sustained at both schools. Transition arrangements have strengthened. Pupils and parents report that anxieties about the transfer to secondary school have been reduced and they settle quickly into new routines.
- Pupils make an important contribution to the federation. Older pupils act as role-models to younger members of the federation, for example in curriculum activities such as dance and technology projects. They have also facilitated meetings with representatives of the local community to raise awareness about the federation and consider ways in which the federation can contribute to improvements in the local vicinity.

Provision

- The quality of teaching has improved across the federation. A strong emphasis has been placed on improving the quality and use of assessment to plan lessons that are tailored better to meet pupils' needs as they progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Increased opportunities to share good practice across the federation have extended the range of strategies used by teachers to promote good progress. Consequently, the aim to create a journey of 'seamless learning' across key stages within the federation is becoming embedded.
- The existing strengths of the curriculum across the federation have been consolidated and improved. Cross-phase activities increase opportunities for older and younger pupils to work together, for example, on engineering and dance projects. The 'skills curriculum', established for pupils in Years 7 and 8, is building effectively on what pupils have learnt during Key Stage 2 and supports the delivery of other subjects. Federation arrangements have also enriched younger pupils' learning experiences through increased use of specialist workshops and laboratories at the college.
- Cross-phase leaders have increased the range of information that is shared across the federation which has enhanced the good quality of care and support provided for pupils. As links become more established between the two schools, staff are more able to anticipate where support may be needed so that emerging concerns can be resolved more rapidly.

Leadership and management

- As joint leaders of the federation, you have reshaped, regrouped and reaffirmed the vision established by the former executive headteacher and have provided a clear direction for future improvement. The positive impact of targeted strategies used to accelerate progress and establish stronger links across the federation during its first year have enthused staff about what can be achieved and raised expectations for future developments. Links with the family of schools have been sustained and

extended so that good practice can be shared across the wider community.

- Federation development plans are well-focused on the federation's vision to improve the quality of provision and raise attainment through a 'seamless learning journey'. Effective monitoring and evaluation procedures across the federation provide leaders with a detailed knowledge about the schools' strengths and weaknesses. However, plans do not always identify measures to evaluate the impact of the federation's work on pupils' outcomes in the short and medium term.
- Leadership capacity, including that of governors, has been strengthened across the federation as a result of effective cross-phase working that enables leaders to share resources and focus on priorities for improvement. This has contributed well to improvements, for example, in the quality of teaching and the development of modern technologies to support learning and professional development across the federation community.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- identifying measurable indicators of progress towards success criteria in all federation plans, to evaluate the impact of actions taken on outcomes for pupils.

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

Sara Morrissey
Her Majesty's Inspector