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Mrs D Wiltshire  
Headteacher  
Churchfields, The Village School  
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Dear Mrs Wiltshire

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 on 01 October 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 overall effectiveness of the model of leadership, a federation of two primary schools, is outstanding.

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

- Good teaching and high expectations ensure that pupils make at least good progress. Since federation, overall standards across the new school have risen year on year. Unvalidated results for Year 6 pupils demonstrate that, in 2008, the overall performance of boys and girls was well above that expected nationally.
- The school's focus on improving pupils' writing paid off in 2008. All Year 6 pupils attained the nationally expected Level 4, although fewer

higher ability pupils attained the highest level in writing than might be expected.

- When one of the predecessor schools was last inspected in 2004, standards had been unsatisfactory. The impact of the federation has been such that, in March 2008, the school's first full inspection report post federation noted that achievement and standards were good.
- Senior leaders have created outstanding links for pupils across the two sites.

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

- Parents and pupils expressed their view that teaching across both sites has become more consistent since federation. One Year 6 pupil noted that teaching is better because 'there are more teachers now and they bounce ideas off each other'. Other pupils agreed. Joint planning across both sites is improving the consistency and quality of teaching.
- Older pupils are benefiting from some specialist teaching one day each week. Teachers are enjoying the opportunity to teach single cohorts for short periods.
- Target setting for pupils is well developed across the federation. Teachers set and review formal curricular targets with pupils each term, so pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- You and your base leaders monitor rigorously the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers receive high quality written feedback, which includes pertinent comments regarding subject knowledge as well as addressing generic teaching skills.

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

- The school is developing a thematic curriculum, with discrete subject teaching where necessary. All teachers note that the combination of the creativity and expertise from both staffs has enhanced this work.
- There is a clear curriculum map which is used to ensure that pupils do not repeat themes at the same skills level. Opportunities for learning outdoors, for example on day and residential trips are not yet tied into this planning.
- Both predecessor schools had satisfactory curricula when last inspected. A mark of the impact of the federation is that the curriculum was graded good at the time of the new school's first full inspection in March 2008.
- The base leader on the Monkton Farleigh site has undertaken an outstanding piece of work to ensure that the different phases of the school's chosen scheme to teach systematic phonics are sensibly aligned to enable coherent teaching across different ability groups.

- A range of extra-curricular clubs are enjoyed by pupils at both sites. All Year 6 pupils were looking forward to attending homework club on the day of the inspection. The club provides a further valuable opportunity for this cohort to be taught as a single year group.
- Parents are not fully aware of the work the school is doing to develop the curriculum and enrich children's learning experiences.

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

- A judiciously considered leadership structure at Churchfields ensures that a minimum of one senior manager is available as a contact point for parents on both sites. Sensibly, the two base leaders carry responsibility for English and mathematics respectively across the school. All subject leaders manage fewer subjects than was the case before federation, and their responsibilities cover both sites. Pupils therefore experience a commonality of curriculum and approach on both sites.
- Senior leaders have developed excellent systems to track pupils' progress, although cohort targets for reading, writing and mathematics are not yet reflected in some targets found in the school improvement plan.
- Named governors track the progress of individual cohorts of children. Governors are assiduous in completing records of their cohort visits, but discussion and challenge regarding pupils' progress are not apparent within the minutes of governors meetings.
- A mark of the success of your work in driving the ongoing development of this federation is reflected in the comment of one parent who was originally opposed to it. She noted that she is 'amazed that the federation has gone so well'.
- The amount of curriculum time that pupils spend travelling between sites has been minimised whilst maximising the opportunities for children of both sites to work together.

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

- Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are making good and often outstanding progress.
- Senior leaders and staff target support effectively to combat underachievement.
- Parents on both sites are pleased that their children can still walk or be accompanied to their village school, and feel part of their villages.

Area for development, which we discussed, include:

- continue work in progress to improve the attainment of higher ability pupils in writing
- ensure that the purpose of opportunities for outdoor learning are explicit in planning and well used as a resource for wider learning
- provide regular brief curriculum updates for parents so they can support their children's learning at home more effectively
- ensure that improvement planning reflects annual targets for improvement for each cohort so that governors are able to hold the school more effectively to account.

I hope these observations are useful to you as you continue to develop the school.

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