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Mr Duncan Bathgate
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Dear Mr Bathgate

Ofsted survey inspection programme: Curriculum Innovation

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 08 November to look at your school's curriculum and how innovation contributes to standards and achievement.

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: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and visits to lessons and the school at work.

This is a remarkable school. The overall effectiveness of the curriculum was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

- Pupils make an excellent start in Reception and continue to make rapid progress throughout the school. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are very high, with very few pupils not achieving at least national expectations by age 11. Many pupils attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Evidence indicates that standards in Foundation subjects are also very high, though the school does not fully collate information about this aspect of work.

- The pupils' personal development is excellent. They love being in school and have a mature understanding of their learning. They are able to work both independently and collaboratively, and they are confident and polite, with excellent behaviour and attitudes. Pupils have good opportunities to have their say about the school.

Quality of curriculum

- Pupils follow a wonderful curriculum. They love it and say that they really enjoy being in school because each day is different and exciting.
- The school has a hugely successful commitment to providing real experiences, with all learning taking place in a meaningful and memorable context. Most learning takes place through 'Mantle of the Expert' in which all children are seen as experts, working for a company or organisation often for several weeks at a time. These companies accept commissions and have demanding clients, which helps inject significant rigour, and good opportunities for assessment. Most of the curriculum, including the teaching of literacy and numeracy, is covered in this way, with the topics changing periodically, so that all subjects and aspects are covered. Pupils often work in role and then come out of role to analyse very effectively what they have done and learned.
- This exceptional curriculum is made possible by the staff's clear and intelligent understanding. Planning is rigorous, with the national curriculum as the starting point. Staff are brilliant at bringing the topics to life to enthuse the children and have very high expectations of what pupils can do. The emphasis is always on the quality of work, in flexible time periods, rather than rushing through to achieve a certain quantity. This leads to in-depth learning and high standards.

Leadership and management of the curriculum

- It has taken some years for the curriculum to reach its current position and it continues to evolve. You lead this process in an inspirational way. The curriculum is a very well thought out synthesis of the ideas of several eminent educationalists, some of whom have visited the school. You and the staff have great confidence in what you do; so there is no hesitation in pursuing fully your chosen approach.
- Members of staff often take part in perceptive discussions together about their work. They also swap classes regularly. This ensures effective peer monitoring of standards as well as curriculum planning and delivery.
- Professional training and development is a high priority in this community of enquiry. Necessarily, the school is far from insular. Many staff take part in local and national conferences and support the work of other schools. This is very important in keeping them fresh and ready to give of their best at Bealings.
- The school improvement plan is brief and clear. It is well written and inspiring, showing the school's place at the cutting edge.

Inclusion

- This is a very inclusive school. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and English as an additional language, achieve very well. Much is expected of all pupils and they do not disappoint.

An area for improvement, which we discussed, is:

- ensure that assessments made in the Foundation subjects are regularly and briefly collated, so that overall standards and any trends can be readily identified.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector