



your reference
our reference
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date 30th June 2008

To whom it may concern.

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Head of Service

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Helena Slaninova

Helena has been employed by Bedfordshire County Council since May 2005, working as a Linguistic and Cultural Mediator for the above Service (the Minorities Achievement Support Service). She has been a member of our team of Mediators who provide assistance to schools to meet the needs of pupils who arrive from overseas and who are learning English as an additional language. The team consists of people who can give support with their bilingual skills and knowledge of the pupils' cultures and countries of origin. This is an essential part of the work of the Service.

Helena has undertaken work for us on several occasions and we have always found her reliable and conscientious. From the way she has communicated and interacted with pupils, school staff and parents, I can be sure she has the personal qualities and expertise needed to undertake support work with people in a variety of situations.

Her work has involved providing information and advice on the needs of bilingual students, in particular those coming from the Czech Republic, and she has done vital interpretation and translation work to/from Czech and English. She has assisted at admission interviews with pupils and parents in school and has given support and guidance to pupils during their first few weeks in the classroom. She has always been punctual in her visits to schools and very caring and conscientious in her support of newly arrived pupils.

She has adapted quickly to the English school classroom environment and has worked in various lessons to assist with a pupil's initial settling into a new school. Helena has shown sensitivity and awareness of the complex needs of pupils who are in the process of learning a new language and at the same time having to adjust to learning the normal curriculum in English schools at the secondary level. When working with a student who is unfamiliar with the English school environment, she has shown genuine understanding of the student's situation and given the student clear, straightforward guidance. She has also helped to explain to teachers about the background of new students and their likely reactions to being in a new environment.

This work requires empathy, and ability to adapt to different people and situations. Helena has shown these qualities in the way she communicates with families, teachers and pupils, especially teenagers.

Helena's command of English is excellent and she has provided accurate spoken interpretation. She has also provided us with written translation of material for use with pupils in schools.

Helena has always been available to help the Service at short notice and has been willing to undertake extra work when required. She has attended our voluntary training session for Mediators and made a valuable contribution to our work.

I can recommend her unreservedly.

Yours sincerely,

John McAllister,
Advisory Support Teacher.