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16 November 2012

Mr Rod Hudson
Headteacher
Falconhurst School
High Trees
Eaglestone
Milton Keynes
MK6 5AX

Dear Mr Hudson

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Falconhurst School, Milton Keynes

Following my visit to your school on 16 November 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

This was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair and other members of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. I also evaluated improvement plans and the school's self-evaluation documents.

Context

Since the inspection the Governing Body has restructured its committees and established new working groups. The school has established links with a partner school in Slough and a local outstanding school to extend the range of support available.

Main findings

The headteacher is ensuring that the school is taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement. Teachers' marking now clearly indicates to pupils how they can improve their work. Training is sensibly focused on improving teachers' questioning skills so they can better challenge pupils in lessons, particularly the most able. Middle managers are not yet checking regularly enough how well their subjects are improving but training is underway to help improve this aspect of their work. Although attendance remains a weakness for some pupils, the school's efforts to improve matters are starting to show some improvement.

The school's development plan focuses strongly on improving teaching and raising pupils' achievement. It covers all the areas that were judged to require improvement. However, despite senior leaders carrying out wide-ranging checks, the plan is not clear enough about the evidence they need to make secure judgements. A well-targeted training programme is helping Governing Body members to successfully develop their skills of interpreting the school's assessment and performance information so they can challenge senior leaders more effectively. Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommended that further action is taken to:

- Ensure that when senior leaders and governors are checking on the school's progress they identify the evidence required to make clear and accurate judgements.
- Ensure that all middle leaders have the necessary skills to make accurate checks on the progress being made in their areas of responsibility.
- Improve further the attendance of those pupils who are frequently absent from school.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support through its school intervention programme. It is helping governors acquire the skills required to better hold senior leaders to account for the school's performance. Well-targeted training is also helping to improve the quality of teaching. The school is drawing effectively on support from its partner school and a local school, to sharpen school improvement planning.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Milton Keynes.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector