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Mr M Mills
Acting Headteacher
Bedale High School
Fitzlan Road
Bedale
North Yorkshire
DL8 2EQ

Dear Mr Mills

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Bedale High School

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 report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me 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.

The visit 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, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, associate headteacher and other senior leaders. Meetings were also held with the Governing Body, representatives of the local authority and students. The school action plan was evaluated.

Context

The acting headteacher at the time of the previous inspection is currently absent from school. An assistant headteacher has been appointed as deputy headteacher. A teacher has been appointed to provide specialist mathematics and science teaching since the start of November 2012. Since 12 November, an associate headteacher is working part-time at the school to provide additional support to school leaders.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors have quickly developed a detailed action plan to guide the school and tackle all of the areas for improvement. They have a passion and commitment to bring change to fruition. Training for staff has helped to develop their awareness of the school's strategic focus on the progress and expectations for specific groups of students. These groups include boys, those eligible for pupil premium, students with special educational needs and disabilities and weaker readers. Staff and governors have a clearer understanding of data as a result of the training. Extra support has been identified for those students who are not achieving as well as they could. However, senior leaders recognise that the school has much more to do in identifying pupils' progress from their starting points on entry to the school in every subject.

Extra support for science and mathematics teaching has provided more time for senior leaders to undertake their responsibilities. They are clear about the task ahead and how they will use focused monitoring methods to drive school improvement. Senior leaders focused approach to work scrutiny has identified best practice and where teaching requires further improvement. Students are beginning to see changes to some aspects of teaching. For example, they are pleased that there are more opportunities for independent learning and that more is expected of them. They report that their work in science and geography is more challenging. Regular marking and feedback to students about their work is taking place in mathematics. However this is not yet across all subjects and little has changed for students in Key Stage 3.

Training to sharpen subject leaders skills in supporting and challenging staff so that teaching improves is planned. Faster action is required to secure this. Governors have quickly formed a strategic group to closely monitor the implementation of the action plan and the impact it has in securing improvements to students' achievement, teaching and leadership. Governors are confident and understand data as a result of the training they have received. Their expectations of middle leaders and how they might challenge and better hold them to account are not wholly clear at this stage.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- Make sure subject leaders consistently support and challenge staff in order to improve teaching.
- Ensure that expectations of middle leaders are shared and that governors understand how to challenge them.

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

External support

The local authority are providing advice and guidance to support governors and senior leaders. They have acted quickly to bring in an associate headteacher to provide additional capacity to school leadership. He has quickly developed an understanding of the school. In a very short time governors and senior leaders are now confident and clear about the next steps.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector