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16 January 2013

Andrea Healey
Big Wood School
Bewcastle Road
Warren Hill
Nottingham
NG5 9PJ

Dear Mrs Healey

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Big Wood School

Following my visit to your school on 15 January 2013, 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 November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, a representative of the local authority and a group of students. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the Governing Body. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Other documents were reviewed, including those referring to monitoring and evaluation and revised data on the progress students are making. The headteacher and I made a tour of the school.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the recent inspection which judged the school to require improvement.

Main findings

The school development plan has been suitably revised and restructured and forms a good basis for future improvement. Timescales and responsibilities are clear, but some of the success criteria focus more on actions than impact.

A new appointment to the faculty structure has been made to enhance developments in subject leadership and extend opportunities for cross-curricular working. The quality of self-evaluation across the group of subject leaders is still variable. Meetings where performance is discussed have been strengthened, with a very strong focus on students' progress, and systems to gather the required data have been improved. At all levels, these data are being used to challenge and improve performance. Systems for performance management have been suitably revised.

The governing body has been restructured and governors have a clearer understanding of their strategic responsibilities. They are receiving support from the local authority to enable them to challenge more rigorously and focus on the impact of actions taken by school leaders.

Best practice in teaching continues to be shared across the school and the headteacher is using local networks to establish links with other schools to expand the range of ideas.

Students are clear about what helps them to learn, but teachers do not regularly capitalise on their good behaviour by giving them more independence and the skills to drive their own learning in order to accelerate progress for all groups of learners.

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 recommend that further action is taken to:

- extend the sharing of good practice in monitoring and evaluation between middle leaders and provide additional professional development with support from HMI
- develop further strategies to encourage more parents to be actively engaged in their children's learning
- enhance the existing good behaviour of the students by helping them to make a greater contribution to their own learning.

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

External support

The local authority has been taking a light touch approach to support and challenge in recognition of the rising standards, improving attendance and increasing numbers

of parents choosing to send their children to the school. They are continuing to provide good support for the headteacher since she joined the school just before the last inspection. Governors are also benefitting from the training they provide.

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

Yours sincerely

Elaine Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector