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Alan Brady
Allestree Woodlands School
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DE22 2LW

Dear Mr Brady

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Allestree Woodlands School

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 and other senior leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority who acts as the school's improvement adviser. The school's improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was also scrutinised, including a recent review of the work of the mathematics department by external consultants, department action plans, recently collected data and a summary of the quality of teaching. A tour of the school was undertaken and many lessons were visited.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the context of the school since the section 5 inspection in November 2012.

Main findings

Since November, leaders have built well on the work which had been started prior to the inspection, to modify the culture of the school. The development of a more robust system for monitoring the quality of teaching has already started to have an impact on the overall quality of teaching. The school has implemented several initiatives to support teachers to improve. These include teachers participating in an 'improving teaching' programme at a nearby national teaching school and others who are more secure in their teaching joining an 'outstanding teaching' programme run by the same provider. It is anticipated that the latter group will run an 'improving teaching' programme in the school imminently. The school has also commissioned other input around how to improve questioning and other aspects of teaching.

Systems for collating data and interpreting it have also been revised. The school is now closely monitoring the amount of progress students make during their time in the school, based on the levels they were at when they entered. This provides baseline data in a number of areas, including reading and spelling. Targets for 'minimum expected progress' based on this data are being set. Leaders are providing support for teachers to use this data to better inform their teaching. This has allowed the school to be sharper at identifying students who are at risk of underachievement in all year groups. As a result, further guidance and support can be targeted at those who most need it. However, this latter initiative in its early days and is continuing to be refined to ensure it is effective across the school.

Leaders and governors share a common vision of improving the standard of education in Allestree Woodlands and are rightly holding staff, including middle leaders, to account for the performance of students in their subjects and classes. They are ensuring that all subjects are clearly focussing on the progress made by student compared to their starting points. All departments now have action plans in place to show how their subjects will help to support this. The governing body have a clear view of their role and are effectively holding leaders to account for the performance of the school. The school's action plan is fit for purpose, but would be improved by ensuring that all entries in the 'impact/evidence' column are clearly linked to how they will support raising achievement.

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:

- HMI to attend a meeting of the governing body to deliver an update regarding what is required under the current inspection framework to move the school to good
- HMI to attend a senior leadership team meeting to look at how data is being used what can be done to ensure that it is being used as effectively as possible to raise achievement.

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

External support

The school has bought in to several schemes to provide support for its improvements. This support is starting to impact on the areas where improvement is required. The support that is provided by the local authority's senior support officer has validated the school's judgments and has also provided support and advice to leaders. Members of the school's staff attend various networks in the local area. However the support provided to the governing body by the local authority service has been disappointing as they feel it has not helped them to address the areas where they feel that improvements are needed.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and as below.

Yours sincerely

David Muir

Her Majesty's Inspector

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form