

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5307
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Direct email: Emma.Thomson@tribalgrou.com



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David Derbyshire
Headteacher
Wadham School
Mount Pleasant
Crewkerne
Somerset
TA18 7NT

Dear Mr Derbyshire

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Wadham School

Following my visit to your school on Wednesday 6 February 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, other senior leaders, the head of science (who also leads the sixth form teaching and learning group) and three members of the Governing Body, including the Chair. The school's post-inspection action plan was evaluated.

Context

A small number of staff changes have occurred since the inspection. A new head of humanities has been appointed, but will not take up post until September 2013.

Main findings

- The school's senior leaders and governors are clear about what needs to improve. The school action plan is thorough and detailed and covers all aspects of the areas for improvement in the previous inspection report; it includes targets for improving the quality of teaching. However, it does not include the school's targets for improving students' achievement or how these will be used to monitor and evaluate improvements in teaching.
- The monitoring of students' progress is rigorous. There are checks to make sure that the assessment information used is reliable and accurate. Senior leaders monitor the progress of all groups of students, including those supported by the pupil premium, carefully. However, they recognise that there is variation in how well this is done by subject leaders and the need to provide targeted support.
- Senior leaders and the governing body are absolutely clear about where teaching is not good enough. The quality of teaching is monitored systematically, but judgements about teaching need to be more explicitly focused on evaluations of students' progress, both in lessons and over time. Good use is made of students' views on the progress the school is making in improving teaching.
- Senior leaders have analysed their observations of teaching well to identify where whole-school professional development is needed. In this, there is a good balance of key aspects of teaching that must be improved with others to 'extend the repertoire' of teachers. Senior leaders recognise that this professional development now needs to be better targeted at particular subjects and individual teachers. Plans for more effectively monitoring the impact on students' achievement are being developed.
- Innovative strategies are being used in some subjects, such as in English, mathematics and science, to enable teachers to model best practice and this is being disseminated more widely.
- The sixth form teaching and learning group is piloting good approaches to develop students' independent learning skills.
- Changes in the curriculum are being considered to ensure that it supports the achievement of all students well.
- Liaison with the two partner middle schools is mainly undertaken at the subject level. Some progress has been made in building on the work to improve 'continuity' (coordinating schemes of work) towards a focus on improving progression in students' learning.

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:

- ensure that the action plan includes challenging targets for improving students' achievement and that it is clearer that improvements in teaching will be judged through improvements in students' progress and achievement

- consider how the governing body can more directly monitor improvements in some subjects to reduce the variation in the quality of teaching and students' achievement.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection and it is recommended that HMI make at least one further visit to the school before its next inspection.

External support

The school is making full and good use of the links with other schools and seminars arranged through the local authority; for example, those with a focus on narrowing the achievement gap between students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students.

It is recommended that senior leaders attend the school improvement seminars organised by Ofsted.

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

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector