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Mrs Pamela Watts
Headteacher
Whytrig Community Middle School
Western Avenue
Seaton Delaval
Whitley Bay
Tyne and Wear
NE25 0EB

Dear Mrs Watts

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Whytrig Community Middle School

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

Evidence

During this visit, separate meetings were held with the headteacher and assistant headteacher, and a group of parents. The inspector conducted separate telephone discussions with the Chair the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. The school improvement plan and post-inspection action plan were evaluated. A range of documentation was scrutinised, which included minutes of the most recent governing body standards sub-committee meetings, recording sheets used by senior staff to monitor pupils' work in school, and a range of pupil progress data that included the most recent updated information of the progress of pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium.

Context

Although there have been no significant contextual changes since the section 5 inspection, the federated governing body of this school, which is the same governing body for the receiving high school and another local middle school, is proposing the co-location of the school on to the site of the high school. The full consultation process has yet to be completed, but it is intended to open on the new site at the start of the 2014 academic year. The appointment of an overall executive headteacher for the three schools is at an advanced stage, but is also awaiting completion of the final consultation process.

Main findings

Senior managers have responded in a timely fashion to the issues raised in the recent inspection report. They have produced a detailed post-inspection action plan, which specifically identifies how the school intends to respond to the three improvement areas raised in the inspection report. Although this plan has some common priorities to those in school development plan there are some anomalies, which would make it difficult for senior leaders and governors to review the overall impact of both plans on the key areas for improvement. For example, there is a priority in the development plan for all teaching to reach at least a good standard in a much shorter timespan than in the post-inspection action plan. The quality of success measures in both plans is too general to accurately assess the progress of some actions, especially where they relate to closing gaps in attainment between different groups of students.

The governing body standards sub-committee has specific responsibility for post-inspection action plans, on behalf of the full governing body. However, involvement in the compilation of the post-inspection action plan has been limited to date, as is their role in evaluating and monitoring the various actions identified in the plan. There is little to indicate how governors from this sub-committee, or others from the full governing body, are involved in the evaluation and monitoring of provision within and across the school. Neither the standards committee nor the full governing body has yet to receive a final copy of the post-inspection action plan for formal approval.

Those parents who met with Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) are positive about the school but would welcome updates in school newsletters of the progress being made towards becoming a good school.

Overall, senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. However, following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- ensure closer alignment and coherence of the priorities, actions and success measures in the main school development plan and the post-inspection action plan
- ensure greater clarity in the detail of the success measures of both plans, particularly when there is reference to measuring the performance of targeted groups of students
- ensure there are clearer and more explicit references to the involvement of governors in monitoring and helping to evaluate the impact of the priorities and actions for continuous improvement in both the school development plan and the post-inspection action plan
- provide updated information to parents and carers about the school's progress towards becoming a good school.

External support

The school has chosen to buy support from an out of county organisation, which limits the number of formal links between the school and the local authority. However, the local authority is keeping an appropriate 'watching brief' over the school, and has called for regular updates, via formal minutes of all full and sub-committee governors' meetings, to assure itself that suitable progress is being made to address the issues raised in the recent

section 5 inspection report.

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

The likely pattern of further visits will be monitoring the progress being made towards the school achieving at least a good overall effectiveness grade.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake

Her Majesty's Inspector