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24 April 2013

Mrs Brigid Tullie
Headteacher
Batley Grammar School
Carlinghow Hill
Batley
West Yorkshire
WF17 0AD

Dear Mrs Tullie

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Batley Grammar School, Kirklees

Following my visit to your school on 23 April 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 the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and five members of the governing body. The school action plan was evaluated and other information, including the self-evaluation report and the latest achievement data, was scrutinised. A tour of the school, including visits to a number of lessons, was also undertaken.

Context

Since the inspection there has been one change in the permanent staffing – the Year 4 teacher has left the school and been replaced by a temporary teacher to the end of the academic year.

Main findings

Following the inspection, leaders responded quickly by implementing an action plan that focuses sharply on the areas for improvement highlighted by the inspection. The action plan is cross-referenced to the school's wider-ranging improvement plan and is monitored closely. Leaders and governors have a very clear view of what needs to be done and are prioritising well and moving the school forward at a very fast but well-judged pace.

The tracking of pupils' progress is increasingly robust helping leaders and teachers to identify and address any under-performance quickly. In the secondary phase, data show that pupils are making much better progress than last year. Staffing issues in English are being addressed and an increasing proportion of pupils are making better than expected progress. The data also indicate that a considerably higher proportion of the current Year 11 pupils will achieve five GCSE passes at grade C, including English and mathematics this year.

Leadership of the sixth form is improving. Both target setting and progress monitoring are increasingly rigorous and a more comprehensive induction programme is planned for September. Entry requirements for A level courses have also been tightened. Pupils in the primary phase continue to make good progress and an outdoor play area has been developed for pupils in the early years.

Teachers have responded well to professional development and the quality of teaching is closely monitored. Personalised action plans, addressing any areas of weaker practice, are helping teachers deliver consistently good lessons and there is already evidence of considerable improvements in some cases. A more robust marking policy has been introduced and work scrutiny is scheduled to monitor its effectiveness.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is better coordinated across the curriculum. An on-line audit of all the activities promoting development is enabling gaps to be filled and resources shared. Plans are in place to introduce music in Key Stage 3 next year.

Governors have a good strategic oversight and are committed to moving the school to good and at the same time ensuring its future viability. They are making improvements to the way they work in order to increase efficiency and are using their growing understanding of achievement data to challenge senior leaders. Governors are accompanying the headteacher on learning walks and forging links with individual departments in order to get a different perspective on the workings of the school and to deepen their understanding.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

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

External support

The local authority continues to give very good support despite having no formal responsibility for the Free School. The local authority is funding a secondary school improvement partner and both staff and governors benefit from local authority training events. The school also receives informal support from the local authority's headteacher group and the network of heads of departments in the three Batley secondary schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector