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3 May 2013

Mr Mark Leicester
Headteacher
Calder High School, A Specialist Technology College
Brier Hey Lane
Mytholmroyd
Hebden Bridge
West Yorkshire
HX7 5QN

Dear Mr Leicester

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Calder High School, A Specialist Technology College, Calderdale

Following my visit to your school on 2 May 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the executive team, comprising the executive headteacher, interim headteacher and consultant headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, the Head of Learning from the local authority and the School Effectiveness Officer. A telephone discussion was held with the School Improvement Partner. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the transitional school improvement plan, governing body minutes and summaries of students' current performance. A tour of the school, which included visits to a number of lessons, was undertaken.

Context

Since the inspection there have been a number of staff appointments, all with effect from 1 September 2013. A permanent headteacher and a new head of visual arts have been appointed, along with a new head and deputy head of English. Two main scale teachers have been also been appointed, one in English and the other in mathematics. The Chair of the Governing Body has stood down from this position and a new chair has taken over. The governing body is at full capacity.

Main findings

Senior leaders have responded quickly to the outcomes of the inspection. They have amalgamated the areas for improvement identified by the inspection team into their current plans and are clear about what needs to be achieved in the coming months. Since their arrival at the school in the autumn term of 2012, the executive team have worked hard to bring about essential improvements. Together they have focused upon high expectations in their efforts to strengthen leadership at all levels, improve teaching and learning and raise achievement.

The use of the 'Ten Steps to the Calder Way' has helped to provide a consistency of approach in all aspects of school life and not just within classrooms. Current assessments of students' performance indicate that this work is having a positive impact on students' progress. Staff morale is much improved. Links with parents and the local community are also improving, not least as a result of the work of the 'Parental Engagement at Calder High', or PEACH, group. Much has been achieved but much has yet to be accomplished.

Governors meet regularly to discuss the work of the school and they are committed to ensuring that the school is judged to be at least good at the next inspection. However, they are not yet challenging school leaders on all aspects of school improvement with equal effectiveness. To help strengthen governance, senior leaders, governors and the local authority are currently exploring the creation of a learning trust between Calder High School and The Brooksbank School, together with other educational and community partners.

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:

- strengthen quickly the role of the governing body by arranging additional training, support and guidance, so that governors can provide effective and focused support and challenge to school leaders.

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

External support

The school continues to benefit from the valuable work of the executive headteacher and her colleagues in the executive team. Although the interim headteacher will return to his substantive post at another local school at the end of this term, the executive headteacher and the consultant headteacher will remain at Calder High School for the next two years. As a result, they will be in a position to provide essential support and guidance for the newly appointed permanent headteacher. Senior leaders have welcomed the support of the local authority's Head of Learning and their designated School Effectiveness Officer.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Maddison

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority - (including where a school is an academy)
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.