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20 May 2013

Zoe King
Headteacher
St Helena School
Sheepen Road
Colchester
CO3 3LE

Dear Ms King

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Helena School, Essex local authority.

Following my visit to your academy on 16 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection on 27 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, two members of the governing body, a representative from the North East Essex Education Partnership, the school improvement partner and two representatives of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

A significant number of staff will leave the academy at the end of this term. New appointments are being made to ensure that each subject has a full complement of teaching staff. The local authority is seeking to provide a proven senior leader to add further capacity to the academy's leadership team.

Main findings

You have responded swiftly to the issues raised in the last inspection by implementing a detailed improvement plan designed to enable the academy to 'get to good' by June 2014. A senior leader and a link governor have been allocated to check at regular milestones that improvements are being made at a good rate and that the academy's targets will be met.

You have a thorough understanding of the overall quality of teaching based on your rigorous management of teachers' performance. This information is being used well to eradicate weaknesses and increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching. You are building further capacity in the academy by providing all leaders and managers with suitable training to help them drive improvements.

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 academy, HMI recommends that further action is taken to:

- embed the academy's detailed improvement plans and illustrate the impact they have on the attainment and progress of all students.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. It is proposed that HMI revisits the academy in the spring term 2014 to evaluate the progress being made and identify any further actions required to enable it to meet its aims.

External support

Good collaborative working with the academy's school improvement partner, its partner schools in the North East Essex Education Partnership, the local authority and external consultants enable it to source a wealth of support and guidance to aid its improvement. The knowledge and expertise within governing body recognised in the last inspection is being put to good use. Experienced governors demonstrate a clear understanding of their role in securing improvement and are fully committed to supporting senior leaders to help them achieve their goal of making the academy a good one.

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector