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Mr J Crofts
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Crofts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wilsthorne Community School

Following my visit to your school on 21 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the Chair, Vice Chair and three representatives of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated. I scrutinised a range of documentation including feedback to teachers from monitoring activities, and governing body minutes.

Context

Since the inspection, a new senior leader has been appointed with responsibility for inclusion and special educational needs, commencing September 2013. A Post 16 Progress Manager has been appointed internally.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors have taken rapid action in response to the detailed feedback from the inspection. The headteacher made sure that all staff and members of the governing body understood why the school was not judged to be good. Short-term action plans have been used effectively to target improvement in specific subject areas. Aspects of teaching such as planning have been identified for development. Teachers receive helpful guidance and examples of good practice to support stronger practice. Follow up observations are used to evaluate progress. This is proving to be a successful approach. The school's use of the 'Learning Clinic' to improve teaching was praised in the inspection report. This is not used strategically to strengthen the teaching of all staff.

Additional improvement plans reflect the school's priorities and identify suitable milestones. However, success criteria are not always sharp enough to measure progress. The plan does not set out when governors will receive progress reports linked to all of the school's actions. Since the inspection performance and target information has been produced for Key Stage 3 students. This is helping the school to identify where intervention is needed.

After the inspection the governing body identified a group of six governors to monitor progress against the school's immediate actions. These weekly meetings are used to check evidence of progress. As a result the governing body has a stronger picture of the school's performance. There is strong evidence that governors are asking more challenging questions of senior leaders, and requesting additional data to check on progress in Key Stage 3. Governors do not gather first hand evidence of the school at work or students' views to complement the information received from the school.

Leaders and governors do not have a systematic approach for monitoring and checking the quality of middle leadership to strengthen consistency. Carefully structured support systems are not matched by clear expectation and targets for improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- extend the use of the 'Learning Clinic' as a whole school strategy for improving teaching quality for all staff
- agree a programme of visits for governors so they can see the school at work, and have opportunities to talk with different groups of students
- develop a systematic approach for monitoring and improving the quality of subject leadership with indicators linked to students' progress and the quality of teaching

- include sharper success criteria in the improvement plan with clear links to show how progress will be reported to the governing body.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has been proactive in identifying where to access examples of good practice. The school has made good use of links with an outstanding school to support work in art. This has assisted with assessment and schemes of work. A visit to an academy in Birmingham has helped senior leaders to consider additional strategies to support improvements in teaching. The local authority adviser visits to monitor the school's developments. HMI agreed with the local authority representative that he would scrutinise the school's evidence of progress on subsequent visits.

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

Yours sincerely

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Her Majesty's Inspector