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21 May 2013

Andrew Knowles
Headteacher
Tupton Hall School
Station New Road
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Chesterfield
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Dear Mr Knowles

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit to Tupton Hall School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a group of Year 9 students. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed including progress data, governing body minutes and records of monitoring activities.

Context

The senior leadership team has been extended and new roles defined to strengthen capacity and accelerate improvements in teaching and progress. Recruitment is taking place for two subject leaders commencing September 2013.

Main findings

The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have acted swiftly to tackle the areas identified for improvement. There is a shared and strong drive and determination to 'get to good' as quickly as possible. This is shown in the school's strategy to improve the quality of teaching. This is matched by revisions to students' targets that add challenge, and raise expectations. Peer coaching is focused on increasing opportunities for students to progress at a faster rate in lessons. The impact is shown in a stronger profile of teaching quality, and school data that shows improvement for current Year 11 students. Leaders recognise that lesson observation judgements must be underpinned by robust progress data and the scrutiny of students' work. The emphasis on quality sharing is helping staff to learn from the school's best practice to strengthen overall provision.

The school improvement plan has been adjusted to take account of inspection priorities. Further work is required to sharpen success criteria to measure progress of all cohorts and groups of students. Milestones are not identified clearly enough so that governors can evaluate progress regularly against the school's actions and initiatives.

Students involved in discussions report that behaviour is improving; they welcome a stronger presence of senior leaders around the school. Students say that procedures for managing behaviour in lessons are not used consistently by teachers. On occasions lessons are disrupted.

The evidence from governing body minutes and discussions demonstrate that governors are now asking challenging questions of the school, and requesting additional information about the impact of new initiatives. Further work is needed to agree the format of reports that track improvements in the quality of teaching and students' progress. Governors do not gather first hand evidence of the school's work through visits to complement information from the school. Since the inspection the governing body have revised the headteacher's performance management objectives to reflect the priorities from the inspection.

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:

- identify milestones in the school improvement plan to evaluate the impact of actions taken over time, including details of reports to the governing body
- include measurable success criteria in the plan that reflect the progress of cohorts and groups of students from their entry to the school
- draw together evidence from progress checks, scrutiny of students' work, teachers' planning, feedback and marking to underpin judgements on the quality of teaching

- identify ways for governors to gather first hand evidence of the school's work through visits and discussions with students and staff
- ensure consistent use of the school's behaviour management procedures to eliminate low-level disruption.

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

External support

The local authority has provided high quality training to support the governing body in offering challenge to the school. This has resulted in stronger insights of the school's performance using local and national benchmarks. Discussions are underway for the school to link with an outstanding school to strengthen governance and accelerate the school's improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikic
Her Majesty's Inspector