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23 May 2013

Mrs S Tufnell
Barnwood Park Arts College
St Lawrence Road
Gloucester
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Dear Mrs Tufnell

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Barnwood Park Arts College

Following my visit to your school on 23 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body, a member of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. Additionally, a discussion was held with a group of students. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the school was inspected, a technology technician has been appointed and taken up post. There are also some short-term temporary members of the teaching staff. Appropriate checks have been carried out to ensure they are suitable and qualified to work in schools.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and her senior leadership have a very good understanding of the improvements required. They have wasted no time in acting on the weaknesses identified in the last inspection and there is already evidence of the impact of their actions. For example, school and external monitoring reports indicate that the quality of teaching is improving rapidly and, as a result, students are beginning to make better progress. Subject leaders have a greater understanding of their role and are more confident about checking the quality of lessons and students' work. In addition, students say that behaviour has improved and there is less disruption to their learning in lessons. These improvements are a result of stronger leadership and increased support from the external consultants appointed by the local authority.

The school improvement plan provides a secure steer to drive improvements. It identifies the most important things that the school needs to do and is clear about how they will be done. Priorities for improvement, such as to improve the quality of teaching, are linked to measurable and specific outcomes and the timescale is appropriate. Effective routines are in place for monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions. However, some of the criteria for judging the success of shorter-term individual actions are not sufficiently quantifiable. Where this is the case, it makes it more difficult for the school to clearly identify and evidence the impact of actions taken.

The governing body provides better challenge and support. They are more knowledgeable about the work of the school and have been pro-active in developing link governor roles with all departments in the school. As a result, all members of the governing body are now involved in evaluating the quality of teaching and monitoring student progress. An external review of governance is underway and governors are committed to acting on the priorities identified from this review to secure further improvements in their contribution to leadership and management.

The local authority provides good support to the school and has responded quickly following the 'serious weaknesses' judgment. Its statement of action draws on support from an external consultant as well as from neighbouring schools. This is combined with a programme of regular monitoring to evaluate the impact of actions and identify next steps in the improvement journey. The Progress Review Board, chaired by a senior member of the local authority and including members of the school's senior leadership team and governing body, helps to ensure that there is no slippage in the planned actions and to monitor and evaluate progress against targets.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire Local Authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Barkway
Additional Inspector