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Mrs Elizabeth Hayes
Headteacher
Boldon School
New Road
Boldon Colliery
Tyne and Wear
NE35 9DZ

Dear Mrs Hayes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Boldon School, South Tyneside

Following my visit to your school on 6 June 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 and senior leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and I undertook a tour of the school, visiting classrooms briefly.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the context of the school since the section 5 inspection. The deputy headteacher will retire at the end of the summer term 2013 and will be replaced by an assistant headteacher.

Main findings

The headteacher and other senior leaders have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the recent inspection. Actions in place prior to the inspection have been strengthened and sharpened and the pace of improvement has been accelerated. The school action plan identifies the most important priorities: improving the overall quality of teaching, building greater capacity within middle leadership and raising the levels of students' achievement, particularly in English, mathematics and science. The plan contains a range of strategies to tackle each of these priorities along with those responsible, timescales for improvement and the success criteria by which they should be measured.

Evidence gathered during this visit demonstrates that the school has made a positive start in meeting these aims. For example, systems to improve how the school tracks the attainment and progress of all pupils and groups of pupils have improved and a much more refined system is now in place. The school is aware that this information must now be used more effectively by teachers to ensure lesson activities match the needs of all pupils. However, leaders and governors have already acted to strengthen the team responsible for intervention and the school is confident, based on assessment information and results already obtained, that progress in the core subjects will improve this year.

The school has implemented a comprehensive whole school professional development programme to improve teaching and teachers have observed good and outstanding teaching both in the school and in its partner school. A small number of teachers have a support plan which involves more individual and targeted support and reviews of these plans show that most of these teachers are improving.

The school's governors are well-informed about its work. They visit the school on a regular basis and the focus and records of governor visits have been sharpened.

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:

- ensure that the school's action plan continues to focus on the areas for improvement and is carefully monitored to judge the impact of this work on pupils' progress
- ensure that effective links with the Harton Teaching School Alliance and with the local authority continue to support improvement in the school, in particular to develop the capacity of middle leaders to drive improvement within their areas of responsibility
- attend one of the Ofsted 'Getting to good' seminars.

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 local authority knows the school well and has provided it with effective advice and support on improvement planning. A school improvement adviser has been appointed to monitor the progress of the school's work. Well-established links with Harton Technology College, a local Teaching School, are providing teachers and middle leaders with regular opportunities to meet and to observe good practice. This partnership work provides examples of effective practice and is supporting teachers and middle leaders to review existing provision and introduce new ideas.

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

Yours sincerely

David Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector