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24 June 2013

Mr Mal Kerr
Headteacher
Noel-Baker School
Bracknell Drive
Alvaston
Derby
DE24 0BR

Dear Mr Kerr

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Noel-Baker School

Following my visit to your school on 21 June 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 on 20 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school development plan minutes from the full governing body and committees. I looked at progress and attainment data for Years 7, 11 and the sixth form, literacy planning for next year's Year 7 students, planning for Year 11 tutor periods to support literacy and mathematics, and monitoring and development of teaching.

Main findings

Since the last inspection you have worked with a greater sense of urgency to address the key issues from the report. Information on students' progress indicates that it is continuing to improve at rate consistent with the targets in your development plan. You have appropriately re-drafted the school's development plan to provide regular milestones towards the targets for improvement.

You have correctly identified that establishing the reading needs of Year 7 pupils earlier will enable more timely action to ensure that they all have the skills necessary to access the secondary curriculum. You have planned appropriately to extend the Year 7 reading test to all students in Year 7 next September. Year 7 English lessons will focus on improving and developing students' communication skills to ensure that every student is at least at Level 4. Staff have had training so that they can support weekly reading in tutor times for all Year 7 students. Heads of departments have identified the opportunities for promoting literacy skills in their subjects. Staff have been trained to improve students' communication skills and to encourage them to use subject specific vocabulary. They have been trained to ask better questions to improve students' oracy.

The line management of the sixth form has been revised so that roles and responsibilities are clearer. Key performance indicators have been put in place to improve monitoring. Systems which are consistent with those used in the main school have been established to check that information from marking and assessments is helping students to learn. More frequent progress checks are in place to inform students and parents about students' progress. Appropriate plans are in place to improve attendance, punctuality and students' attitudes to learning including the implementation of a new dress code and activities to make tutor periods more purposeful.

The attendance of the governing body has begun to improve. Some governors have had training to address the skills gaps that the governing body has identified. Evidence of any challenge from the governing body is not fully recorded in the minutes of meetings. There is insufficient evidence of governors' monitoring of teaching and of students' progress. Only two governors attended the feedback from my visit. To communicate the main points in my report to all governors I have invited the governing body to meet with me at 18.00 on the 1 July 2013.

Senior leaders 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 governing body tighten its monitoring of the quality of teaching and students' progress in order to hold all leaders to account more effectively.

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

You make effective use of the opportunities provided by the local authority to moderate your judgments through the regular meetings with the local authority adviser. This support enables you to have an accurate view of the school's improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector