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18 July 2013

Mr Gary Johnson
Headteacher
Kirkburton Middle School
Turnshaws Avenue
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Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Johnson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kirkburton Middle School, Kirklees

Following my visit with Janet Palmer Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 17 July 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with you and other senior and middle leaders, six members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school's post Ofsted improvement action plan and other documents relating to the school's work since the April inspection.

Main findings

Leadership of the English team has been restructured with an overall head of English and a second in the department who is due to be appointed in the Autumn term. Leaders had carried out a scrutiny of students' English books. However this activity focused on aspects of compliance with school policies. In the future, book scrutiny and other monitoring activities need to focus more deeply on the progress of students, the impact of teachers' marking and whether the work is meeting students' needs precisely.

Leaders have established a curriculum and achievement group to scrutinise this aspect of the school's work more closely. Members of the Governing Body have attended training on performance management and capability and Ofsted's 'Getting to Good' seminar.

The Governing Body has agreed that there will be no automatic pay progression but that these will be linked to teachers' and leaders' performance management and the achievement of students. Governors and leaders accept that there is still more to do to sharpen the way they hold middle leaders to account. There is little mention of how they will do this in the current plan and I discussed ways of doing this during my visit.

Middle leaders accept that previously there was not enough monitoring of teaching and students' work. Aspects of marking have been reviewed and a new system is being introduced to ensure students are sure about what they should and must be able to do. Leaders have organised teaching family groups to support teachers in improving aspects of teaching and learning and have drafted a timetable for monitoring activities in the next academic year. A system of setting and scrutinising targets for individuals as well as groups has been implemented and there are more frequent meetings to discuss students' progress. Middle leaders acknowledge that there has been too little accountability and that they need to improve this to support the school's drive to improve to 'good'.

Governors and senior leaders, though disappointed by the outcome of the inspection accept that it was the correct judgement for the school. Senior leaders have focused on supporting staff and boosting morale after a turbulent year. However, they accept that the school now needs to focus on getting to 'good' and ensuring that all staff share a sense of urgency and drive to get there. Information about the quality of teaching and progress of students do not match. You understand that there is more work to be done to secure an accurate view of the quality of teaching by triangulating evidence of observations, work scrutiny and information about students' progress.

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

- secure an accurate view of the quality of teaching by triangulating evidence of observations, work scrutiny and information about students' progress.
- ensure middle leaders monitor aspects of teaching and learning more frequently and hold teachers to account and following up on issues identified.
- sharpen the way governors hold the school, and in particular middle leaders, to account and ensure a greater sense of urgency and drive to get to good.

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

Since the inspection the school has fostered links with local school to help review its English curriculum. The school improvement partner has planned a series of joint observations with senior leaders in the autumn term. The school has also strengthened links with feeder first schools to moderate students' levels of achievement, ensure better transition and to address the issue of students' previous levels of progress from Key Stage 1. There are early indications that this is having a positive impact on the results achieved by Year 6 pupils in national tests.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector