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5 July 2013

Mrs T Thomas
Headteacher
Ashton Park School
Blackmoors Lane
Bower Ashton
Bristol
BS3 2JL

Dear Mrs Thomas

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ashton Park School

Following my visit to your school on 5 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report my findings. 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and the school improvement officer to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated and the latest achievement data was scrutinised.

Context

The school is currently restructuring the roles and responsibilities of senior staff.

Main findings

Since your section 5 inspection, you have taken time to reflect on what the key priorities are to enable your school to become good. Along with your senior leaders, you have devised improvement plans that are rightly rooted in developing the quality

of teaching and ensuring that all staff members are rigorously held to account for the outcomes of students. These plans identify key actions but they also need to have specific, measurable outcomes, which are regularly reviewed throughout the year.

All teachers have completed a 'teaching skills audit' and this has enabled you to begin to personalise professional development for staff. One element of this, that your English department recognised, is the need to ensure that students have more opportunities to work independently. The English team have reflected and acted upon this, with the result that there are already some clear improvements in the quality of their teaching.

You have changed your processes for target setting, data collection and monitoring progress. There is now a clear focus on tracking levels of progress and through this you have heightened expectations about students' achievement. More staff have been employed to implement interventions at an early stage, particularly around literacy, and this is having a positive impact. You are also developing your performance management processes and it is important that targets set for all staff reflect these higher expectations. We also discussed the need to routinely hold staff to account for the outcomes of students they are responsible for.

The most recent achievement data that you presented indicates the current Year 11 standards will be significantly improved this year, particularly in English. The data for other years also shows an improving trend.

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 performance targets are used to rigorously hold staff to account for the outcomes of students they are responsible for
- ensure your improvement plans have clear measurable outcomes with regular milestones to check on the progress of these
- link with a good or better school to observe their practice and to forge developmental working relationships between senior and middle leaders.

We agreed that I will return to the school to:

- work alongside you in developing performance targets that hold staff to account
- observe and offer developmental feedback to staff in their second year of teaching.

External support

You have drawn on support from a variety of partners who have carried out specific pieces of work at the school. You have also received headteacher mentoring support from the Cabot Learning Federation. The local authority school improvement officer has carried out joint lesson observations with senior leaders and also provided support around attendance. She monitors data carefully and has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Your deputy headteacher attended the Ofsted 'Getting to Good' seminar and you feel this has provided you with ideas to hone in on key school improvement activities. I also pointed key leaders to the Ofsted English and mathematics training materials. We discussed linking you more formally to a good or better school so that you can observe their practice and forge developmental working relationships between senior leaders. I will identify an appropriate school, broker their support and make the first visit with you to discuss priorities for this joint work.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for The City of Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe
Her Majesty's Inspector