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9 July 2013

Mrs K Palmer-Greene
Headteacher
Bristol Gateway School
Long Cross
Bristol
BS11 0QA

Dear Mrs Palmer-Greene

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bristol Gateway School

Following my visit to your school on 9 July 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 in April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, and held meetings with several staff with responsibilities, the Chair of the Governing Body with another governor and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement action plan was evaluated. The outcomes of the school's and the local authority's monitoring activities were taken into account. I had a tour of the school, accompanied by you and another member of staff.

Context

Several members of staff are leaving at the end of the summer term. Replacements have been appointed for September 2013. A new assistant headteacher has recently been appointed and is already working in the school. Another assistant headteacher starts work in September 2013.

Main findings

I am extremely pleased to report that the school has maintained its upward trajectory of improvement over the last year. The drive for improvement has been relentless. You have been ably supported and challenged by the governing body and the school improvement officers from the local authority. The work with an outstanding special school has also been very productive, for example in helping middle leaders to develop their confidence to take on greater responsibilities and help raise the standards of provision in their area(s) of responsibility. The school's action plans focus on the right areas of improvement. Expectations are clear and aspirations are high. The middle leaders I spoke with are rightly excited and enthusiastic about the school's journey of improvement. They each explained the improvements that have taken place over the last few months. These include:

- students challenging each other when behaviour slips because, 'it is not what we do here now'.
- parents and carers having a greater involvement with the school
- an increased consistency in lesson planning, assessment and marking
- students' improved spiritual, social, moral and cultural development
- the extensive literacy programme where some students have made rapid gains in their reading abilities.

We discussed how this pace needs to be maintained and how additional reinforcement of 'non-negotiable expectations will help to set the boundaries and raise aspirations still further.

Senior leaders, working with the governing body and the local authority, are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement. You, and others, have worked incredibly hard to try to make the buildings welcoming and safe. Nevertheless, a considerable capital investment is needed to make the school environment fully fit for the purpose of teaching young people with special educational needs in the twenty-first century. The school should take further action to:

- urgently work with the local authority to resolve the building issues so that they reflect a modern high quality school learning environment by ensuring that:
 - the school immediately implements the risk assessment measures we discussed
 - the perimeter is secured; while maximising the available outdoor space for students' use
 - metal window restrictions, bars, grills, spikes and wires are removed and alternative ways found to keep the building secure and the people within it safe

- girls have access to appropriate showering facilities
- the derelict building next to the school is removed so that it no longer acts as a magnet for undesirable activities within the locality.
- provide more support for local schools in order to help them retain pupils and students in full-time education and reduce the exclusion rates in the locality, and increase attendance in the locality.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector