

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

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Hyder Dastagir
Headmaster
London Nautical School
61 Stamford Street
London
SE1 9NA

Dear Mr Dastagir

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to London Nautical School

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, other school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plans and looked at other documentation including information about students' current achievement. I accompanied you on a brief visit to a small number of lessons and I observed part of a staff-training event about the importance of focussing on students' progress.

Context

An inclusion manager, appointed from within leadership team before the last inspection, has taken up his post. Leadership posts have been re-aligned to the key areas for improvement identified in the last inspection.

Main findings

Along with other leaders, you have communicated with clarity and a sense of urgency about what needs to be tackled for the school to be judged good or better at its next inspection. Higher expectations at all levels and a common drive and purposeful response among leaders acknowledge that the pace of change needs to be faster and sustained over time. Leaders are tackling some additional issues that were not specifically referred to as areas for development in the inspection report. For instance, they are evaluating the difference being made by Year 7 catch-up funding and its positive impact in students' achievement.

The very strong focus on improving the quality of teaching is already showing impact. Leaders have set out clear expectations for quality and consistency in teachers' planning. This includes a strong focus on developing students' writing and other literacy skills in different subjects. Higher expectations, for the achievement of the most able and other groups of students, are accompanied by a sharper focus on narrowing any gaps in achievement. A range of policies, for instance in literacy, marking, and homework, have been drawn up to provide clarity of expectation and greater consistency in practice. A carefully thought-out lesson observation process has been devised to enable leaders get a better sense of improvements on a regular basis.

Training has a very strong focus on improving the quality of teaching. Staff are in no doubt that they are accountable for their impact on students' progress and learning. Leaders have consulted with staff about key changes and this ensures that common responsibility for them. The school has agreed a 'teaching and learning charter'. It sets out ten 'non-negotiables' which staff are expected to deliver in each lesson. These include, for instance, that students are challenged by the work. Another 'non-negotiable', ensuring all students are engaged, was palpable in my brief visits to lessons. Greater use could be made of the range of good practice and subject-specific professional development materials available through Ofsted's website. This applies particularly to subjects referred to in the inspection report where attainment has been low, for instance in design and technology, and geography.

As a result of changes in how assessment information is used, much greater emphasis is being given to tracking the progress of students at all levels and how this compares with national performance and expectations. Current school data show that students are, indeed, making better progress across the school, including in the sixth form. Year 11 students are on track to make better gains in key GCSE results, although school leaders recognise that this has not yet been confirmed by examination results.

Leaders have drawn up a range of appropriately detailed raising attainment plans covering the key areas for development identified at the last inspection. These plans are well coordinated and have a very strong focus on what needs to be achieved in the short and longer term. In a few instances the outcome or success criteria are not precise enough, because they are written as a set of tasks. The school has rightly

recognised that some areas for improvement, such as in the sixth form, require more focussed and intensive efforts because there is more ground to be made up. The dedicated plan for improvement in the sixth form identifies the right areas to be tackled. However, leaders could do more to ensure that sixth form developments are made more explicit in other plans and policies. Changes are being made to ensure that the sixth form curriculum is more relevant to the needs and interests of students, and that effective guidance is in place for them.

The governing body shares the senior leadership's strong determination to bring about rapid and sustained change. Governors are asking more searching and detailed questions about performance and how well the school's strategies and resources are being used to bring about change. They are keen to do what they can to sharpen their practice. I agreed to make information from Ofsted's findings into effective governance available to them.

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 focus improving the quality of the sixth form, and the impact it has on students' achievement, is given constant priority
- enable subject leaders and staff, for instance in design and technology, and geography, to access good practice and professional development materials available through Ofsted's website
- make sure that outcomes and success criteria in action plans are sufficiently precise so that impact can be evaluated.

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 is providing valued and worthwhile support through the work of its school improvement advisor. His contribution to lesson observations has helped the school confirm where outstanding teaching practice lies, so that this can be shared with other teachers. The school is now subject to more intense scrutiny by the local authority and this has the right mix of strong challenge and effective support. The local authority's action plan sets out a clear framework its support and for holding the school to account for rapid and sustained improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lambeth and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

John Kennedy
Her Majesty's Inspector