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Mr J Bower
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bower

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woldgate College, East Riding of Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with: you, your two deputies; an assistant headteacher; several heads of department and sixth form tutors; a local authority representative and three members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's post Ofsted action plan was evaluated and I examined school documents, including monitoring records of teaching and your latest progress data.

Context

Since the recent section 5 inspection, one member of staff has resigned and the senior management team has been re-structured.

Main findings

The school's leaders have been industrious in the weeks since the Section 5 inspection. There is a new head of mathematics, changes have been made to senior leadership responsibilities and a focus group to drive improvements in teaching and learning has been established. The post Ofsted plan has been devised and implementation has begun,

Including staff training to underpin the developments planned. While the school's work is in its infancy the vision for whole-school improvement has been shared and staff are aware of the part they have to play in the schools evolution. Higher expectations for the planning and delivery of lessons, tighter marking guidelines and more regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. Whilst some staff have been bruised or perplexed by this, they are much clearer about the focus on ensuring students make fast and sustained progress in their lessons. A number of middle leaders welcome the increased authority they are being given and the added accountability that comes with it while others, despite the training already undertaken, remain a little anxious about whether they are suitably equipped to implement their new roles and responsibilities. The school acknowledge this and further training is planned in the Autumn term. Some middle leaders accept that to this point they have operated as separate subject silos with little or no understanding of what works well in other subject areas. They are now relishing the opportunity to work more collaboratively and to learn and share effective practice with their colleagues throughout the school.

Provision and outcomes in the sixth require improvement to be good like the main school and although some students achieve highly this is not consistently the case. In response the school is introducing a broader curriculum to improve retention rates and specific training to enhance the quality and consistency of teaching so that the pockets of excellence practice that exist become more prevalent.

The school's leaders are frank about their current circumstances and recognise that significant work is required before they can assert with confidence that staff consistently offer: suitable challenge, engagement and inspiration in every classroom which enables all students to thrive and make at least good progress.

All governors are linked to a subject area and have regular contact with the subject leader. They know the school well and make use of their relevant skills and experiences to help them to challenge the school to develop in key areas of its work. For example, the teaching and learning committee is led by an educationalist. They also accept that their strategic influence needs to be more apparent in securing the necessary improvements and recognise that newer governors would benefit from a formal induction process, while more established members do not always access update training regarding their roles and duties.

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:

- link formally with a good or outstanding school with strengths in teaching and learning
- ensure governors, particularly newer ones, undertake local authority training to support their induction and heighten awareness of their specific roles and responsibilities
- make certain that the new procedures being introduced and the roles and responsibilities staff have assumed are routinely followed and undertaken effectively
- ensure that the people chiefly responsible for implementing the strategic actions are not also chiefly responsible for monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness or success to avoid a conflict of interest.

It is likely that Ofsted will conduct a further visit in the Autumn term 2013 and, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has begun to mend the fractured relationship it had with the local authority and there is a more productive partnership evident. The school improvement partner has been instrumental in: objectively evaluating the quality of provision in the school; supporting the development of middle leadership; providing advice and guidance on key priorities and the post Ofsted action plan; and monitoring and reviewing the school's progress in tackling its key issues. Some teacher specific coaching and mentoring has also been scheduled. Staff from the school has visited Longcroft School in Beverley to discuss improvement strategies.

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

Yours sincerely

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector