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13 September 2013

Chris Beech
Headteacher
King Arthur's Community School
West Hill
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Dear Mr Beech

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to King Arthur's Community School

Following my visit to your school on 13 September 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- integrate more closely the procedures for tracking students' progress and for evaluating the quality of teaching
- provide clearer exemplification of the quality of work that is expected of students.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and three members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The school's analysis of students'

achievement and the quality of teaching were discussed. I also undertook a tour of the school with you to look into some lessons and to hold brief discussions with some students, both in lessons and around the school at break time.

Context

The report on the recent inspection makes clear that, at the time of the inspection, a number of new approaches had been adopted within the school, but that these had yet to have the full impact expected. Since the start of this school year, these changes have been applied across the school and given fresh impetus to the school's improvement work. There have been a number of changes to teaching staff and the senior leadership team has changed significantly.

Main findings

- During the course of the previous school year, the headteacher, who had joined the school at the start of that year, worked extremely hard to establish basic systems and routines to improve students' achievement, behaviour and attitudes and to raise the overall quality of teaching. These are now well established and mean that the school is ready to make the required improvements to raise students' achievement further.
- The headteacher, other senior leaders and governors are fully aware of the challenge the school faces to become at least good, including those facing a small school with declining numbers of students and the associated financial issues. They fully recognise the need for the pace of improvement to become more rapid and for the new approaches to quickly show a positive impact. Challenging targets have been set to achieve this as quickly as possible.
- The school has a rigorous process for setting targets for all students. More systematic evaluation of students' progress is now being used well to plan the help and support needed by individual and groups of students to enable them to achieve these targets.
- A good system has been introduced to ensure that students receive regular, good quality feedback on their work so that they are clear about how to improve. In some subjects, students need clearer exemplification of what good and better work looks like.
- The school has much more rigorous procedures for observing and monitoring the quality of teaching and providing support for those teachers that need it. However, insufficiently rigorous account is taken of information about the progress of teaching groups to inform evaluations of the quality of teaching. I agreed with you that this is an area where I will provide more support and will come to the school to work with all teachers early in the spring term 2014.
- All teachers are expected to follow and implement a set of 'non-negotiables' in their planning and teaching, while allowing enough flexibility for the best

teachers to be creative. The best teachers in the school are being used well to support others.

- Support and training for teachers is matched well to whole-school, subject department and individual teacher's needs. The focus is increasingly on ensuring that teachers fully understand the principles behind the improvements in teaching required, and are not just equipped with a set of strategies to follow.
- The school has taken extensive actions to improve students' attendance. This has had some positive impact, but attendance is still not good enough. Further measures have been introduced and the impact of these will be checked carefully. I agreed that you will identify and let me know of any factors where external support may be required.
- Governors are provided with clear information on students' progress, attendance and the quality of teaching to enable them to ask challenging questions of senior leaders. However, the governing body currently has five vacancies meaning that it does not have the full range of skills and expertise to 'get underneath' the data provided for them and provide the full range of support the school needs. They know this and we had a useful discussion about ways forward. They agreed to let me know if they identify any areas where they would value external support.

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 school is making good use of links with an outstanding school to develop skills in subject leadership, for example, in English. It has also made good use of advice from the school improvement partner. The school has not received well-targeted or extensive support from the local authority; the decline in the performance of the school over a number of years prior to the arrival of the current headteacher had not been tackled effectively.

I agreed with you and with governors that where additional or more focused external support is required, you will let me know and I will help to identify schools and/or other partners to provide this. In particular, I will try to identify a good or outstanding school of a similar size and context.

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

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector