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25 September 2013

Mrs Lesley Abercromby
Headteacher
Windlehurst School
Windlehurst Road
Hawk Green
Marple
Stockport
Cheshire
SK6 7HZ

Dear Mrs Abercromby

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Windlehurst School, Stockport

Following my visit to your school on 24 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:

- strengthen the action plan with the inclusion of staggered milestones, clear, quantitative targets for improvement, especially in relation to the quality of teaching and learning, and nominated leads for each action to clarify the lines of accountability
- establish links with and arrange a programme of visits for staff to mainstream and special schools to widen awareness of effective strategies to teach mathematics, reading and communication skills
- consult the students to gain an overview of the factors that account for their attendance, work rate and conduct.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and other documents reviewed, including the headteacher's reports to governors, data regarding attendance and exclusions, and performance data from 2012/13.

Context

One teacher left the school at the end of the summer term; two teachers have resigned and will leave in October. A newly qualified teacher has joined the Key Stage 3 team. The school is currently advertising for a teacher with expertise in mathematics. Two experienced governors will join the governing body in November.

Main findings

Senior leaders, the governing body and the local authority accepted the findings of the inspection in June and have worked together to agree a plan of action which reflects all aspects of the identified areas for improvement. Although the plan gives a clear picture of phased action, it lacks clear milestones with linked targets to guide rigorous, critical evaluation of the effectiveness of what is being done. Governors are meeting monthly to check and question the progress being made.

A start has been made in implementing the action plan but it is too soon to evaluate the impact of initiated changes. However, changes have underlined some concerns. For instance, Key Stage 3 is now organised in line with primary practice with all three form-teachers delivering English and mathematics. This heightens the urgency of training, as well as awareness of effective practice in other schools, to ensure that all staff are confident in planning progression in learning and in ensuring the right level of individual challenge in mathematics, reading and communication skills. The deputy headteacher is leading the work to refine the setting of individual behaviour targets and to develop mentoring and group discussion times. Staff are now expected to take full responsibility for managing students' behaviour and for dealing with issues as and when they occur. Not all are doing so to the same extent, indicating a pressing need to agree 'non-negotiables', as has been done in respect of aspects of teaching. The collection of students' mobile telephones at the start of the day has reduced significantly distractive behaviour in lessons. Moves are afoot to provide more activities at break times, especially for Key Stage 4 students, but the action plan does not recognise the potential of seeking students' views in how to maximise the potential of the accommodation, resources and current activities to foster students' respect for themselves, others and the environment.

Staff have agreed a programme to enable the headteacher to conduct the performance management of all teachers. As part of their monitoring, governors have asked to see sample targets for improvement and reports from learning walks.

There is scope in the action plan to identify progressively increasing quantitative targets for the quality of teaching to reflect the expected impact of action and support. This would also serve to emphasise the urgency behind the action plan.

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 working with the school to plan improvement and to monitor progress. It has identified consultants and Specialist Leaders of Education (SLE) to provide support in mathematics and reading later in the term. It has also agreed a full review of the quality of teaching, behaviour, safety, leadership and management, to take place in November, to identify where additional support is required.

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

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] – for academies