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14 October 2013

Mr G Watson
Headteacher
Tewkesbury School
Ashchurch Road
Tewkesbury
GL20 8DF

Dear Mr Watson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tewkesbury School

Following my visit to your school on 14 October 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 July 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:

- ensure your improvement plans have clear measurable outcomes with regular milestones to check on the progress of these
- link with a good or better school to observe their practice and to forge developmental working relationships between senior leaders.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. There were also a number of short visits to lessons. The school raising achievement plan was also evaluated.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, there have been some changes to staffing. A new member has been appointed to the senior leadership team who has responsibility for monitoring data and tracking students' progress.

Main findings

Following the inspection, you have raised expectations with regard to the quality of teaching. You are also placing greater emphasis on monitoring students' progress to secure teachers' accountability for facilitating students' learning.

Teachers have been given clear guidance on expectations with regards to planning lessons, developing literacy across the curriculum and feedback through marking. Planning now requires teachers to provide activities that suitably challenge students of all abilities and also highlight how they are going to evidence progress during the lesson. Opportunities to develop students' literacy skills are incorporated and a new marking policy has been implemented, which requires students to respond to teachers' comments.

These new initiatives are monitored regularly by heads of faculty. The senior leadership team has implemented quality assurance weeks to ensure all teachers are meeting these raised expectations. You have implemented a more demanding performance management policy and process and each teacher's targets includes developing students' literacy skills, a personalised target to improve their own teaching and raised expectations of student outcomes.

The school has effectively developed its strategic use of data. There is a clear target setting process and progress data is now collected six times per year. This will enable you to keep regular checks on how well students are achieving. It will also ensure that any underachievement is quickly identified so that remedial action can be taken. The information gathered can also be used to judge the effectiveness and impact of the different interventions being introduced. Importantly, there is a greater awareness across the school of the need to monitor the progress data for specific groups of students, particularly those who are eligible for the pupil premium.

Your analysis of the 2013 examination results, indicate some improvements in levels of progress in English. This is not the same in mathematics where results declined. Your raising achievement plan identifies appropriate areas for improvement and key activities to bring about improvement in mathematics. It does not, though, have clear measurable outcomes with regular milestones to enable the governing body and leaders to check on the progress against these targets.

The Year 7 curriculum has been strengthened through the use of pathways which enable students to follow a curriculum suited to their needs and interests. Some students have extra literacy and numeracy sessions to develop these key skills. There is also a pathway to extend the more able. Teaching assistants have been deployed to faculties according to their skills and interest to enable them to provide more specialist support to students.

The post 16 provision is in the process of being developed. You have rightly recognised that it is essential that entry criteria are challenging enough to enable students to be successful on the more academic courses.

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 employs a school improvement partner. She has been used predominantly as a member of your performance management panel, but there are plans to utilise her in more whole-school improvement work. We discussed linking you to a good or better school so that you can observe their practice and forge developmental working relationships between staff at the different schools. I will endeavour to identify an appropriate school and broker their support for you. I also brought your leadership team's attention the Ofsted publication, 'Getting to Good' to enable you to get an understanding of successful strategies schools have used to move to good and beyond.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Education Funding Agency, the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire, and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe
Her Majesty's Inspector