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27 November 2013

Mr C Sammons
Headteacher
St Katherine's School
Pill Road
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Dear Mr Sammons

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Katherine's School

Following my visit to your school on 27 November 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 September 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated and there were short visits to lessons.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed and there will be a change in the leadership of science from January 2014. A different local authority improvement partner is working with the school.

Main findings

You have made a very strong start in tackling the areas identified for improvement at your recent inspection. Senior leaders are very clear about the expectations placed on them to improve the areas they are responsible for. They communicate high expectations to staff and students, showing great passion and a relentlessness to ensure improvements are brought about quickly.

There is, rightly, a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching. Teachers are more effectively planning work which meets the needs of all students within their class. The different levels of work are shared with students at the start of each lesson. During the visits to lessons, students were able to explain what they were learning and what they would need to do to reach the higher level objectives. Teachers are using seating plans to ensure that they monitor closely students, or groups of students, who may be at risk of falling behind.

Regular lesson observations are being conducted as well as short visits to lessons to ensure new initiatives are being followed by teachers. There is a clear plan in place to develop the practice of teachers who are not deemed to be delivering good lessons. This plan includes professional development sessions and also using the best teachers to work as coaches.

There are raised expectations around what students are able to achieve. This is evident in the performance targets that have been set for staff. These targets are monitored to ensure that students make at least good progress from their starting points. Staff at all levels are being rigorously held to account to ensure this happens. Your recent observations indicate a significant improvement in the proportion of good and better lessons that are being delivered. As a result of this, students' attendance has improved and exclusions have reduced compared to the same time last year. Your current achievement data indicates standards are improving although students are not achieving as well in mathematics as they are in English.

The governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. The governors analyse data succinctly and are able to offer both challenge and support to you. The school's development plan has clear measurable outcomes, with milestones to check on the progress being achieved. Each initiative is evaluated by a member of the governing body so that they are able to judge the impact it has had in raising standards.

External support

The local authority is providing helpful support in reviewing the progress you are making to becoming a good and better school. They are also providing high quality support to develop and improve the quality of teaching, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

You have made some links with other local schools. This will enable you and other leaders to share ideas and experiences and to identify best practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe
Her Majesty's Inspector