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Mr Hardial Hayer
Headteacher
The Radclyffe School
Hunt Lane
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Lancashire
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Dear Mr Hayer

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Radclyffe School, Oldham

Following my visit to your school on 4 December 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 October 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:

- review approaches to teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 so as to better embed literacy skills across the curriculum and to develop a culture that more fully enables students to develop their independent learning skills.
- cultivate ways to engage students more actively as participants in the development of a strong aspirational and improvement culture.
- extend work with external partners so as to further entrench an improvement and aspirational culture.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. A telephone conversation was had with the school achievement partner. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Documents summarising other actions taken since the section 5 inspection were also scrutinised. A learning walk of the school was undertaken with the headteacher.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school's context since the section 5 inspection.

Main Findings

The headteacher and other senior leaders have produced a post inspection improvement plan that tackles the key recommendations arising from the October inspection. It is supported by a well-focused monitoring and evaluation schedule that charts actions taken and evaluates their impact. A school post-inspection monitoring group comprising the headteacher, senior leaders and governors meets termly to review the tracking and evaluation of progress.

The school has a concerted focus on intervention strategies to tackle underperformance particularly in English. Roles and practice within the English department have been reorganised and re-focused. Good tracking and monitoring systems are now identifying where interventions are required to enable improved student progress. Most recent progress data and reviews of student work indicate that attainment at Key Stage 4 is improving. Controlled assessment practice has been sharpened. Links between English and higher performing curriculum areas have been enhanced to facilitate the sharing of best practice. There has been a stronger focus on improving the quality and presentation of student work in exercise books. Student exercise books are regularly monitored. Staff training has a strong focus on improving the quality of teacher feedback and marking skills. Actions have been taken to ensure that each faculty has a clear marking policy which is strictly implemented. There has also been a stronger focus to ensure that work in lessons meets the learning needs of all students. Unannounced lesson observations by senior leaders have been introduced to check on the quality of marking, work presentation and differentiation. Coaching and bespoke packages to improve identified subject areas and individual teachers requiring improvement are in place. Accountability at all levels has been strengthened. A review of literacy cross the curriculum has been completed to inform further development. Strategies introduced in Year 7 and 8 to improve reading ages and practice are having an impact. The stronger promotion of a reading culture is visible around the school and in classrooms. However the need for further action to embed reading, writing, listening and oracy skills is recognised by senior leaders. I discussed with senior leaders the need to engage pupils more fully as participants in the development of an improvement culture. I have also asked the school to consider how best to develop the Key Stage 3 curriculum so as to better enhance and embed student literacy and independent learning skills. Governors have strengthened their understanding of student monitoring and tracking evidence and how well students are doing. They have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve.

External support

The local authority is committed to supporting the school in aiding its improvement planning and practice. The local authority has supported the work of an achievement partner with the school and this is a productive partnership that is supporting and enabling improvement. The school is also part of a borough wide school to school partnership which focuses on ways to support improvement. I have suggested that work should be extended with best practice external partners so as to enhance the development and sustainability of an aspirational and improvement culture.

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

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty

Her Majesty's Inspector