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17 January 2014

Mrs Alison Elliott
Headteacher
Lakers School
Five Acres
Coleford
GL16 7QW

Dear Mrs Elliott

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lakers School

Following my visit to your school on 17 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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:

- ensure the school raising attainment plan has clear measurable milestones to check on the progress towards targets
- align members of the governing body to each area of development to further enhance their understanding of key improvement priorities and to ensure they are able to hold the senior leadership team to account
- link with a good or better school to observe their practice and to forge developmental working relationships between leaders.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, learning progress leaders and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school raising attainment plan was evaluated.

Context

The school has a newly federated governing body that are also responsible for a local primary school. There are some staffing issues in the English team, which you are devoting a significant amount of time to resolving.

Main findings

You have made a good start in addressing the areas for improvement identified at your recent inspection. The main focus is, rightly, on developing aspects of teaching to ensure that teaching is consistently good and better.

A review of the quality of teaching and of all policies has been conducted. As part of this, you have carried out joint lessons observations with leaders who are responsible for subjects. This has enabled you to quality assure these leaders' judgement on the quality of teaching. They have then conducted lesson observations on all of their team members, so that the school has a clear overview of the quality of teaching. You also used these observations to specifically focus on the quality of questioning and student engagement, which were areas identified in need of development at the previous inspection.

Regular scrutinies of work are being conducted by all staff. This is to enable staff to look at each other's practice and to identify the most effective strategies particularly with regards to marking. As a result, a new marking policy has been implemented. This now gives students opportunities to respond to teachers' marking so that they can demonstrate that they understand how to improve their work. Although this initiative has only recently been implemented, your evidence suggests it is being consistently applied across the school and the impact of this will be analysed in due course.

The most effective leaders of teams are being utilised to support other teams. This is beginning to have a positive impact as good practice is shared amongst others, in particular by enabling teachers to share their thoughts and ideas on teaching ideas and to reflect on their practice objectively and identify areas to improve.

Data is now being used effectively to raise aspirations by setting students targets that are based on their results obtained prior to entry into Year 7 and reflect them

making good and better progress over their time at the school. Checks on progress are carried out every six weeks and this data is analysed succinctly to enable any underachievement to be addressed swiftly. Your current data indicates continued improvements in students' outcomes.

The newly federated governing body is beginning to understand its role and responsibilities more fully. As members of the governing body develop their depth of understanding they are offering more challenge and rigour with regards to their monitoring of school priorities. The school's raising attainment plan identifies key actions and outcomes. There is a need, however, to align governors to each areas of improvement so that they can strengthen their understanding of these key areas and are also better prepared to hold senior leaders to account. The raising attainment plan does not have measurable milestones, which members of the governing body can use to closely monitor the progress being made to meet each target.

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 has brokered support from a local school and are also meeting with you half-termly to review your progress towards becoming a good school. There is not, however, enough urgency from the local authority to helping you to resolve the staffing issues in the English team.

I will link you with a good or better school to enable you to observe their practice and to forge developmental working relationships between leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe
Her Majesty's Inspector