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25 March 2014

Mrs Ann Andrew  
Headteacher  
High Park School  
Thorn Lane  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire  
BD9 6RY

Dear Mrs Andrew

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to High Park School, Bradford**

Following my visit to your school on 24 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you and your senior staff 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 November 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:

- integrate the actions planned to develop governance into the school's improvement plan.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority.

## Context

The school is experiencing some staffing difficulties which are having a negative impact on its capacity to make the planned improvements. Eleven staff are absent long term, in the main due to ill health. There are high levels of short-term staff absences. Not all staff are regularly punctual. Although the number of teachers in post has gradually increased during this academic year, and more have been recruited with start dates in the coming two terms, the school is short of teachers.

## Main findings

The headteacher, newly in post at the time of the section 5 inspection, and senior leaders recognised that assessment of pupils' progress was unreliable. They promptly began to develop a detailed rationale for assessment and, through training, to establish with staff a shared understanding of this. Importantly, rigorous moderation is now built into the assessment process. Implementation of the new system is underway, providing staff with the technical vocabulary to describe the transactional support they provide and to evaluate the difference this is making for pupils. Targets have been revised to make these realistic for each pupil. The interventions provided for pupils, such as aroma and rebound therapy, are now mapped more efficiently and leaders have begun to evaluate their impact more rigorously to ensure that the best use is made of the school's resources.

Leaders are aware that the shortage of teachers, and resulting lack of leadership of learning, has led to unevenness in the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, they have focused on improving the overall performance of staff who teach. A key element of this is the introduction of appraisal for higher level teaching assistants. In the main, the staff concerned have welcomed greater clarity about their responsibilities, the chance to reflect on their performance and opportunities for professional development. The headteacher has also reviewed the scale of the school's outreach work, reducing this in some areas in order to increase the school's capacity to meet the pupils' needs.

Although teaching commitments mean that middle leaders are not able to fulfil their leadership roles fully at present, they form part of the extended leadership team which meets regularly to check on the school's progress and determine the next steps forward. All are completing a recognised course in middle leadership and value this development opportunity.

A review of governance immediately prior to the section 5 inspection has been followed up recently by a development day for governors. This has helped them identify better ways of working, including methods for checking on the school's performance for themselves. Governors have particular areas of responsibility, such as staff attendance, and some are now attached to the pupils' bases. The governing body checks regularly on progress with the school improvement plan, where planned developments in governance would ideally sit. The level of challenge provided by governors is increasing. The headteacher and governors have agreed new ways of

reporting on the school's work that focus more sharply on the strategic decisions which need to be taken. The urgent need for more effective clerking has been highlighted so that school leaders and governors are clear about the actions agreed and who is responsible for these.

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 provides a range of support and challenge through termly meetings which check on the school's progress, as well as identifying and commissioning support. For instance, this term support for teaching numeracy provided by a local authority consultant has been welcomed by staff. Support has also been provided to assist the development of governance. Staff value the help available through the District Achievement Partnership. This includes annual reviews of the school's performance, collaborative work on curriculum development and opportunities to share good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin

**Her Majesty's Inspector**