

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

1 April 2014

Mr Jeremy Garner
Headteacher
de Stafford School
Burntwood Lane
Caterham
CR3 5YX

Dear Mr Garner

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to de Stafford School

Following my visit to your school on 1 April 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 December 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:

- develop the school's short term action plan so it shows how the progress being made will be sustained into the future, and include clear check points at specific times so progress can be tested.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I scrutinised a range of documents including; the school action plan, the latest school action plan progress report and student progress data. A tour was taken of the school which included short visits to lessons.

Main findings

You have effectively set about addressing the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. This is being done with a sense of urgency and belief. The school's priorities and actions are clearly focussed on ensuring at least consistently good teaching across the school. You have sensibly built on the improvements that were already evident at the previous inspection. Your short-term action plan is well focussed and sets clear targets for student achievement and the quality of teaching. Your recent checks show you are making progress in improving both areas and you are usefully evaluating the findings to identify the next areas to work on. However, the school's action plan needs to show how progress will be sustained through the summer term and into the future.

Senior leaders have continued to develop the good data and tracking systems commented on at the previous inspection. As a result, the school can now accurately check the progress students are making. Senior leaders now use these systems to more systematically identify students who have fallen behind and need extra support to catch up. This is particularly evident in Years 11 and 9. Leaders work with other school staff to ensure that students then receive the support needed more quickly. The school is carefully checking the effectiveness of this support and developing a better understanding of what works and what does not. Senior leaders recognise that this approach needs further development and have plans to increase the impact in other year groups.

The school has established an appropriate and clear accountability structure for the management of the speech, language and communications unit. The member of staff responsible for coordinating the provision for students with special education needs and/or disabilities (SENCO) now leads this provision. These changes have improved the capacity to support students who attend the unit. The school has also reviewed the support provided for other students with special education needs and/or disabilities. As a result most teaching assistants will now be deployed to work with departments rather than individual students. This has the potential to improve the impact teaching assistants make on learning. Appropriate training and support is being planned for this change, but it is too early to see the impact.

You have rightly focused much time and energy on developing consistently good quality teaching across the school. You are keen that wherever possible teachers learn from each other and support each other's development. An example of this is the use made of your most effective teachers in supporting the development of others. Leaders make effective use of external expert support when it is needed. You have used the weekly staff development sessions well to introduce teachers to new approaches that they are expected to take. Ensuring time in lessons for students to reflect on teachers' written feedback and improve their work is an example of one such approach. During our tour of the school we saw that these new

techniques are being effectively used in some lessons but practice is inconsistent. You already knew this to be the case. You have suitable plans to support and challenge teachers who are finding it most difficult to respond, and recognise the need to focus closely on ensuring that all staff follow expected practice.

The governors clearly understand their role and have the expertise needed to be effective. They have reviewed the way they work to ensure they are clearly focussed on the areas for improvement that the school needs to address. They now have the information they require to support and challenge to school to that end.

External support

The school is making effective use of a range of external support. The local authority knows the school well and is providing the support required. They are carrying out helpful half termly monitoring visits. You are using information from these well to negotiate any further support you require from them.

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

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Her Majesty's Inspector