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Mr Bruce Roberts
Headteacher
Leytonstone Business and Enterprise Specialist School
Colworth Road
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Dear Mr Roberts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leytonstone Business and Enterprise Specialist School

Following my visit to your school on 21 May 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 January 2014. 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:

- implement the recommendations outlined in the review of the pupil premium and ensure that actions taken are closing the attainment gap.
- develop the capacity of senior and middle leaders to manage and sustain the planned changes.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, four middle leaders, a group of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also visited a number of classes with you to look at the quality of marking. I evaluated the school improvement plan and scrutinised various documents, including minutes of governors' meetings, monitoring records of teaching and performance

management, information on students' progress, and in particular the outcomes of literacy intervention work and the whole school literacy project.

Context

The governing body has appointed a permanent headteacher to the substantive post. The appointment will begin in September 2014. As the interim headteacher, you will resume your former role as the senior deputy headteacher. Following the inspection, four teachers left the school and five more will be leaving at the end of this term. Supply teachers on long term contracts have filled all vacant posts. You are currently in the process of interviewing suitable applicants to take up permanent positions. Four middle leaders were seconded to the senior leadership team for two terms to lead on different projects. These include, developing a whole school literacy programme; working with and supporting newly qualified teachers; developing students' engagement in their learning and, working on interventions, particularly with primary schools. The school has been affected by falling roles in the south of the borough. As an outer London borough, the school is also experiencing difficulties recruiting suitable applicants.

Main findings

Your open and honest approach about the inspection judgement has helped the school to move forward. You have not evaded the issues that have prevented improvement. Everyone spoken to – staff, governors, students and the representative from the local authority, were very clear that you have made a difference to driving improvement. Recognition of your work is linked to your clarity of direction and strategic planning. As a result, all recognise that previous approaches to accelerating students' achievement were not good enough. Your staff are supporting you. For example, the middle leaders are clear about the journey the school needs to make to achieve 'good' at the next inspection. Your quick response to remodelling the school to achieve this goal shows a good understanding of the work that needs to be done. Changes made include the secondment of four members to senior roles to drive changes. My scrutiny of the literacy project, and the appointment of a dedicated teacher to improve students' literacy skills, show that students are responding very well to the support provided. For example, the assessment information shows that more students are likely to gain a good GCSE grade in English. You have also allocated more time to the teaching of English. The review of the pupil premium has taken place and it would seem that the funding is being used creatively. However, the recommendations have yet to be implemented fully.

You and middle leaders have indicated that much has been done to develop high quality teaching. For example, performance management is used to hold staff to account and move those on who are not meeting expectations. Hard-hitting messages are given but within a supportive way. Staff say that the new performance

management system includes helpful and quantifiable targets. They are in no doubt about expectations. Monitoring has increased and now includes a good range of activities when scrutinising the quality of teaching. Tracking of students' progress is more robust and regular and the information provided refers to most groups of students; the exception is the oversight of students with special educational needs. Leaders at all levels are stepping up to the mark but there is still more to do to increase their capacity and develop their skills to drive change at a quick pace.

Staff are in no doubt that they have benefited from working in partnership with the southern partnership, particularly as it provides opportunities for them to share good practice. The quality of marking is much improved but our scrutiny of students' books indicates that this is not yet consistent. The development plan is fit for purpose but while it includes clear milestones and some success criteria, it does not refer to measurable targets for achievement.

Members of the governing body have taken a lead in driving the changes; they are alert and have used their experiences of the past to move forward quickly. For example, they are using that vast reservoir of expertise to triangulate evidence and provide more challenge; they are more demanding. Consequently, information on students' progress is now accurate and they are familiar with analysing and using assessment data to challenge staff. They have taken steps to rectify shortcomings such as the use of the additional funding to support eligible students.

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

Prior to the inspection, the local authority had expressed concerns about the school's effectiveness. You and other leaders, including governors, are clear that the local authority has been supportive. It has been instrumental in helping you all with the appointment process of the new headteacher. The local authority is also providing advice through the achievement partnership, and to middle managers, in particular, those leading English and mathematics. Regular strategy meetings are used to hold you and your staff to account for students' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector