

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

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

Direct T: 0121 679 9158
Direct email: rachel.dayan@serco.com



11 June 2014

Mr Ian Belham
Headteacher
Bacton Community Middle School
Wyverstone Road
Bacton
Stowmarket
IP14 4LH

Dear Mr Belham

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bacton Community Middle School

Following my visit to your school on 10 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 February 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:

- enable all pupils in all subjects to respond to feedback on their work that makes clear what they need to do next in order to improve
- ensure that teachers effectively challenge the minority of pupils who still need to improve the presentation of their work
- enable all pupils to engage in activities that will help them to develop their ideas fully and solve problems
- increase further the involvement subject leaders have in checking standards in their areas, by ensuring they undertake observations of teaching

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I made brief visits to a number of lessons and examined documents relating to the outcomes of monitoring activities and the impact of performance management.

Context

Since the previous inspection, one teacher has left, and another has joined the school.

Main findings

School data indicates that the progress pupils make across Key Stage 2 is not yet in line with nationally-expected levels, but is accelerating. A greater proportion of Year 6 pupils are achieving the expected level of progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and attaining in line with age-related expectations, than was the case in 2013. Pupils in Year 5 are making particularly rapid progress in reading and mathematics. Pupils in Year 7 and 8 are making good progress overall, with a high proportion of pupils working above the level expected for their age in mathematics.

You and your senior leaders have set demanding and well-targeted priorities for improvement; your colleagues have responded swiftly and positively to this clear lead. Since the previous inspection, subject leaders have become more involved in monitoring the quality of work in their areas through, for example, regular checks on the quality of marking and the analysis of pupil progress data. They have carried out joint lesson observations with senior leaders but have yet to take the lead in this work during their departmental 'monitoring weeks.' Senior and other leaders have ensured that all teachers can benefit from the expertise of the most effective through training and the sharing of resources and ideas. This has helped ensure, for example, that strategies to develop pupils' literacy skills have been shared across all subjects.

The quality of teaching is improving. Changes within particular subject areas have increased the frequency with which pupils write at length for different purposes. Teachers use questioning to encourage pupils to develop their ideas and their problem-solving skills more often than at the time of the previous inspection, though the extent to which this happens remains variable from class to class. Teachers plan additional activities within lessons that challenge the more-able and use their pupil progress data to plan work that will help all to take the next steps in their learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning are more positive, because activities are typically engaging and teachers make clear to them how the work they are doing will enable them to make progress towards their targets.

Overall, the quality of marking is more secure than at the time of the previous inspection because leaders are helping teachers to meet clear, recently-revised expectations. Written comments are regular and usually, but not always, identify clearly what pupils need to do in order to improve their work. When marking is strongest, pupils answer additional questions or challenges posed by their teachers, who check these and add further comments. This work is still in its infancy, and not all pupils are yet responding appropriately to initial teacher feedback on their work. Some continue to present their work poorly and this is not always corrected effectively by their teachers.

The governing body continues to offer support, and to hold school leaders accountable for progress towards improvement plan objectives. Governors supplement the monitoring information they receive through regular visits to the school, and by carrying out audits, including of the quality and impact of marking, alongside senior leaders. Visits to other schools to see aspects of effective teaching and learning have helped inform governors' evaluation of aspects of the school's work. Link governors provide support and challenge to subject leaders, with whom they are in regular contact.

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

Local authority officers have helped leaders to draw up, and monitor progress towards, focused improvement plans that address the school's main priorities for improvement. The local authority has provided mentoring for senior leaders and appropriate training to help individual subject teachers to meet their challenging targets. The school works with other middle schools to share expertise, and benefit from that of others.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard
Her Majesty's Inspector