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24 June 2014

Mrs Beverley Evans
Headteacher
Oakwood School
Woodside Road
Bexleyheath
Kent
DA7 6LB

Dear Mrs Evans

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oakwood School

Following my visit to your school on 24 June 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 March 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:

- ensure action plans include all the areas for improvement from the recent inspection report
- identify how and when actions will be monitored so that governors can evaluate how well leaders are improving the school
- check that the admission register is always correct and the new systems for addressing poor attendance and persistent absence are helping students make rapid improvements from low starting points.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, two representatives of the local authority and a National Leader in Education (NLE) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with a group of teachers

and spoke informally to students in lessons about their work. The school improvement plans were evaluated. You took me on a tour of the school site to see the improvements you have made to the school buildings and grounds.

Context

Since the inspection a middle leader has taken up a secondment at another school within the federation partnership and will return to his post in January 2015. A higher level teaching assistant has left the school to take up another post within the federation. A mentor for students diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders has taken up her post this term. A new executive headteacher has been appointed for January 2015, when the current post holder retires. The external review of the governing body has been completed. You have remodelled the reception area and have implemented a maintenance and refurbishment programme to further improve the school site.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the improvements that are necessary and are working to address them. However, the school improvement plans do not reflect this. Some of the areas for improvement from the inspection report are not included in the plans. It is not clear which leaders have responsibility for monitoring the success of specific actions and you are not linking how the monitoring of actions will lead to improved rates of student progress. There are no milestones identified within the plans and timescales for the completion of actions have not been agreed. Governors are therefore unable to hold leaders to account as strongly as they should because they cannot measure how effective any actions have been or check that improvements are happening quickly enough.

Students are making better progress in all subjects and year groups because the quality of teaching has improved. Most students are making at least the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics. You are starting to use assessment information to identify where further interventions are needed for students who are not on track to meet their targets. Vulnerable students and those eligible for the additional pupil premium funding are monitored carefully to ensure they achieve as well as their peers. Assessment information is shared with teachers who report on the amount of progress their students are making more regularly. As a result, students are making better progress towards targets that are set at the correct level.

Attitudes to learning have improved and far fewer students are leaving lessons because of negative or challenging behaviours. The number of students who have been temporarily excluded has also reduced this term. An analysis of behavioural patterns and trends has allowed you to identify why students are not engaging with their learning. As a result, you are now able to identify triggers that influence their behaviour and provide support before their learning is interrupted.

Attendance rates have improved slightly since the recent inspection but new interventions to reduce absence are at an early stage. Some students still do not attend school as regularly as they should. Students in Key Stage 3 currently attend less frequently than older students and too many students are only making slow progress towards their attendance targets. The admission roll currently includes students who have never attended the school or who are now on roll elsewhere. The school's overall attendance figure is therefore inaccurate because the admission roll is not effectively monitored and updated.

Governors are well informed and bring a wide range of skills to their roles. Several are headteachers and can offer you helpful advice and support. Governors have taken account of the recommendations made by the external review of governance and are working to address them. They are participating in the working parties that have been established to oversee key improvement areas. Governors are committed to making a difference and understand that they need to hold school leaders to account more robustly.

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 established a partnership board to challenge, monitor and identify further support for the school. This has included arranging support from a national leader in education (NLE) who meets with you weekly to help evaluate the impact your actions are having. As a result, your expectations have risen and you are demanding more from your students and staff. You draw support from other headteachers within the federation who work together to meet the needs of all students within the partnership of schools. Staff are participating in additional training provided by external consultants to improve students' reading, writing and mathematical skills. Work completed in students' books suggests that this is starting to make a difference to the quality of work they produce.

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

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Cox

Her Majesty's Inspector