

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

16 July 2014

Mr P Salter
Headteacher
The Brakenhale School
Rectory Lane
Bracknell
RG12 7BA

Dear Mr Salter

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Brakenhale School

Following my visit to your school on 15 July 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection, and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- rework the school improvement plan so it details all the main actions to be taken and the resulting improvements expected in teaching and learning at key points in the year
- make sure that plans for how different subjects are to be taught specify the skills and knowledge that students of different abilities should gain as they move through each year
- ensure that clear expectations are set for assessment, marking and feedback
- carry out an external review of governance.

Evidence

During the visit, I met 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's action plans and information about students' progress. We briefly visited lessons around the school to see teaching and learning.

Context

An assistant headteacher is retiring this summer. Senior leadership team responsibilities have been adjusted to compensate for this reduction in senior staff.

Main findings

You are not addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection urgently or effectively enough. Your school improvement plan is not sharp enough. Planned actions are not clearly detailed in a logical time sequence. The progress you expect to have made at key points throughout the year as a result of these actions and the specific impact that this will have on the achievement of students is not defined. The results of recent work to improve teaching are limited. A nearly completed policy includes helpful minimum expectations for marking at the end of a piece of work but does not consider how teachers should use assessment and feedback in lessons to help students improve. Work to ensure that plans for teaching specify the skills and knowledge that students of different abilities should acquire has been ineffective. Your ideas for sharing good practice across the school and the recent decision to accept a local authority proposal to link with local good schools are appropriate. The same is true for your ideas to develop the capacity of middle leaders. However, detailed and swift planning is needed to ensure that these take effect quickly.

Your plan to introduce new courses in the sixth form has not been informed by careful consideration of the needs and aspirations of the students and the school's capacity to teach new courses well. This is necessary if better opportunities and outcomes for sixth form students are to be achieved.

Governors recognise they need to be more effective. All governors are planning to link to a subject area or year group and carry out school visits. However, they have not challenged you about the quality of the school improvement plan or the lack of urgency with which areas that require improvement are being addressed. They are uncertain whether the school will become a good school. They agree that an external review of governance will be helpful.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. My next visit will focus on the capacity of leadership and management to swiftly bring about sustainable improvement in teaching and achievement.

External support

The local authority is providing appropriate support and monitoring your progress closely through its Brakenhall School Standards Monitoring Board. You have been challenged about the quality of your school improvement plan at a recent board meeting. An adviser has been working effectively with the English department this year, as recognised in the last inspection report. She is now broadening her work to help improve teaching across a wider range of subjects.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Education Funding Agency and the Director of Children's Services for Bracknell Forest.

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Her Majesty's Inspector