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Ms E Wilkes
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Wilkes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oakfield Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 16 September 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 academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 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 immediate action to:

- improve the consistency of teachers' feedback in all subjects so that pupils know what to do to improve their work and are given greater challenges
- reduce the achievement gap between those pupils who are entitled to free school meals and their peers
- ensure the full governing body track the progress of the school in terms of pupil progress and use this information to measure the impact and effectiveness of actions.

Evidence

To evaluate the action taken since the last inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders and members of the governing body. I undertook a series of short visits to lessons, looked at pupils' books and a range of school documentation about

the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The school improvement plan was also evaluated.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection, in April 2014, there have been some new promotions to the leadership team and the governing body is in the midst of reorganisation. Significant changes have also been made to the day-to-day running of the school. In particular, there are new policies for marking pupils' work and changes have been made to the times of the school day.

Main findings

Since your appointment in January 2014, you have spearheaded a period of considerable change. While several leaders are new in post, they have a good understanding about the context of the school and the people within it. You have provided a clear mandate for their work. They know what they need to do. Although it is early in the term, they have already taken on their new roles with gusto, relishing the opportunity to be part of the transformation of Oakfield Academy.

You have used the inspection points for improvement and your own knowledge about the school to construct an appropriate draft improvement plan. This has a sharp focus on the key things that need to be done first, to quickly move the school forward to being good or better. We discussed how this, and other plans, might be refined, by having further specific measurable targets, frequent well-defined timescales for completion and more explicit cross-referencing between the plans.

School information shows that in 2014, pupils in Year 6 scored over 80% in reading, writing and mathematics combined, and over 90% in each of the three separate subjects. This is a big improvement over the previous year. The progress pupils made between Years 5 to 8 also improved in reading and writing; in mathematics it stayed about the same. These figures and other school information provide evidence that the school is quickly evolving on its journey to good. Nevertheless, school leaders and the governing body know that the momentum of these improvements needs to be sustained, and that the attainment gap between those entitled to free school meals and their peers needs to be reduced.

Changes to the school day provide pupils with greater opportunities to read for pleasure and to hone their reading skills with staff. Also, more opportunities are being provided for pupils to write at length.

Marking is more frequent and teachers are following the new marking policy. Nevertheless, the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils about their work is inconsistent. For example, in one of the mathematics books seen the pupil was asked to convert written numbers into digits as an extra learning challenge. In contrast, another was praised for their efforts and accomplishments, but was not

given any additional challenge to thrust them along in the next steps of their learning.

Senior leaders are acutely aware that some staff are still in the process of getting used to the schools' new policies and procedures. Since the last section 5 inspection, school leaders have had training in conducting lesson observations. More time has been given to them to check on the progress that pupils are making in their areas of responsibility. This will help them, and the governing body, to monitor staff performance and set robust targets for pupils' achievements.

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

The school is using the Somerset Local Authority Governor Services and an external consultant to help reshape and train the governing body. There are firm plans for further training to take place to ensure that new members, or those who have new roles, will be effectively equipped to challenge and to support the school. In addition, the school is already working closely with neighbouring schools to secure further improvement. This is already successfully supporting pupils when they move from the infant schools to Oakfield, and when they leave Oakfield to join the College.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector