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17 September 2014

Mrs Sian Thomas
Executive Headteacher
The Bridge Short Stay School
Dock Road
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Cheshire
CW9 5HJ

Dear Mrs Thomas

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Bridge Short Stay School, Cheshire West and Chester

Following my visit to your school on 16 September 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 June 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:

- have a website that contains all statutory information
- urgently resolve the data management system so data can be shared and evaluated across all the school's sites
- improve the action plan to include more specific measurable outcomes.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the headteacher and deputy headteacher of school, a group of Year 10 students, a parent governor and the Chair of the governing body, and a representative of the

local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated.

Context

The executive headteacher, with strategic oversight of the school's sites, has returned to The Bridge Short Stay School after a period of absence. Two additional governors have joined the governing body since the section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement.

Main findings

Leaders consulted staff on all sites, the local authority advisor, the school improvement partner and the governors to reflect a team approach to the school's response to the inspection. The action plan contains all the areas requiring improvement from the s5 inspection report; however, it lacks clarity about the timescales for specific actions and how actions will be evaluated to demonstrate the impact they have on students' progress. Although the plan lacks clarity, the school has addressed a number of the issues raised by the report and improved the quality and impact of leadership. The executive headteacher is keen to share the work of the school more widely and consult further with schools that use the services offered by The Bridge Short Stay School.

Time is set each week for staff, across all the sites, to meet and improve consistency across the school. As a result, staff have improved the assessment and recording of students' progress. However, the data management system is only available on one site, due to technological problems, and this has adversely impacted on data analysis to inform future development. Consistent diagnostic tools for reading and spelling are used across all sites to increase the accuracy of students' targets and allow for improved comparison of progress and attainment. Flexible timetabling allows staff to work collaboratively to better meet the needs of students and target support. For example, a teacher of English is supporting in a physical education theory lesson to promote reading and writing skills.

A comprehensive training package is in place for the academic year as a result of targeted consultation. The school is working with the school improvement officer from Archer's Brook School to develop literacy resources and increase staff knowledge. Recent training focused on students' understanding of inference. Consequently, students have regular reading sessions, involving poetry and play reading to encourage them to develop comprehension, and improve oral and listening skills. Story-telling forms part of the curriculum so students have to research and consider purpose, audience and style when writing for different age ranges to improve their skills. Staff have been challenged to prove their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills can meet the needs of the students: they have risen to the challenge and set an example for the students about the importance of continual learning and development.

Marking of students' work is more consistent and helpful to students so they learn from their mistakes. Marking is monitored so the impact on students' progress can be tracked and evaluated. Likewise, revised procedures to tackle poor attendance and punctuality are in place to identify problems and analyse the impact of interventions.

Reports are more frequent and detailed to encourage accelerated progress through improved communication and support from parents. For example; thematic tutorial sessions, which incorporate literacy and numeracy skills, are the focus of weekly reports to parents about students' social and behavioural progress. Reports on curriculum progress, with information on attendance, punctuality, behaviour and academic progress, are sent home at the end of each unit.

The governing body includes a parent governor and another governor, with a range of multi-agency experience, to broaden the expertise of the governing body. Governors have liaised with the County High School to share good practice regarding tracking students' progress. Governors are aware the website needs to set out the vision and ethos of the school and demonstrate the partnerships that exist with schools that refer students to The Bridge. Governors and leaders are keen to have a platform to share and celebrate the school's progress and successes with the wider community and ensure they comply with all regulations.

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 leaders and governors appreciate the support offered by the local authority regarding technical help with the data management system, the website, and the brokered links with the literacy advisor. The local authority representative has a good working relationship with the school and intends joining them at a forthcoming 'Getting to good' seminar.

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

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh
Her Majesty's Inspector