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Mrs Margaret Bridson
Headteacher
Impact
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L30 2QQ

Dear Mrs Bridson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Impact, Sefton

Following my visit to your school on 23 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:

- increase the consistency of expectations from staff so that students are clear and better equipped to make progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair and three other members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I visited classrooms with the head of centre and talked to staff and students. The school action plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement, two teachers of English have been appointed: one as Head of English. A teacher of mathematics and science and an assistant headteacher, responsible for inclusion, have been appointed and start in January 2015.

Main findings

The action plan addresses the areas requiring improvement identified in the recent inspection report; however, it lacks clarity about timescales and how the actions taken by the school will be checked for impact on students' achievement. Although the plan lacks clarity the school has taken a number of actions which have already had a positive impact on the school.

There is a new staffing structure and middle leaders have clear responsibilities and are enrolled on accredited leadership training programmes. Clear expectations have been set for middle leaders, regarding lesson observations, work scrutiny, tracking students' progress, and departmental meetings, to monitor the quality of teaching. Middle leaders' involvement with evaluation and performance management reviews is promoting a more consistent approach to learning. Middle leaders have visited all school sites plus some alternative providers to drive improvement through sharing good practice and raising expectations of students' progress.

A new building programme on the Dale Acre site will provide a sports hall, construction area and cookery room in order to reduce off-site provision and increase the learning time available to students. Computers have been updated to improve students' access to learning at home, including on-line qualifications. On the Oakfield site, more classrooms have been created for intervention work to fill gaps in students' learning.

The marking policy was reviewed and a half-termly focus established to improve literacy skills across the school. For example, staff are targeting punctuation when marking students' work this half-term and classroom displays support this skill. Reading skills sessions takes place every morning, subject specific vocabulary is more evident in classrooms and library resources have been improved as part of the drive to improve literacy in Key Stage 3.

Partnership agreements with other schools have been tightened and referral forms are more detailed. As a result, a clearer entry and exit strategy for each new student is established, prior to admission, which allows improved tracking of progress against their targets.

The school's behaviour policy was reviewed and amended by staff to increase the consistency for students. Students explained they appreciated this new approach.

Staff are being supported to apply this policy consistently to enable students to improve their attitude to learning and make better progress.

Governors responded promptly to the inspection recommendations. They are supportive of the senior leadership team and are working collaboratively to ensure there is greater consistency across all sites to improve outcomes for the students. Governors are more involved with middle leaders, through their links to subjects, and this gives them better insight into the school.

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 accessing external assessment of students' reading skills to standardise baseline assessments and have more secure information about students' progress. A review of marking was undertaken by the local authority's secondary intervention lead. Consequently extra support and challenge was given to staff and senior leaders to monitor the consistency of marking. The local authority intervention officer works closely with the school and head of English to raise the profile of literacy across the sites and all subject areas.

The advisor attached to the school supported leaders during recent appointments. The local authority supported the school by meeting with staff last term to emphasise the importance of following whole-school agreed procedures consistently across all sites. The school engages well with the local authority and the advisor currently working with the school has confidence that senior leaders will be robust about moving the school forward.

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

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh
Her Majesty's Inspector