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Ms K Garland
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Garland

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brimsham Green School

Following my visit to your school on 27 January 2015, 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 October 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 that all of the improvements it has made are applied consistently well by all teachers and in all subjects.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the Chair and another member of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated and the implications of the external reviews of the school's governance and the use of additional funding

through the pupil premium were discussed. Tours of lessons were undertaken with senior leaders, one looking specifically at sixth form lessons. In all of these lessons the inspector looked at the teachers' evaluations of students' current progress and talked to students about their work.

Main findings

- The headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and governors are absolutely clear about what the school needs to do to improve. They have set a tight timescale to become a good school as quickly as possible. Governors are developing a set of milestones to check that the school is improving rapidly.
- Leaders have further improved the school's procedures for monitoring students' progress, including in the sixth form, and the quality of teaching. Consequently, the actions taken prior to the inspection are now being applied more consistently. More teaching is consistently good, although there are still weaknesses in some subjects, including English and science.
- The local authority has provided training for governors matched well to the recommendations in the external review of governance. Governors are providing sharper challenge to the school as a result. Governors now undertake more independent analysis to ask the right questions of senior leaders, although this is still developing. The arrangements for individual governors to work with particular areas of the school are now more tightly focused on those areas requiring the most improvement.
- Based on the school's current data, students' achievement is set to improve again this year. All students are now set challenging targets. Achievement for the current Year 11 is on track to be above national averages for both progress and attainment. The achievement of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is improving at a faster pace so that gaps between their achievement and that of other students are narrowing. The achievement of students in English is improving significantly. The school's procedures for checking the accuracy of achievement data are rigorous.
- The progress of students in some other year groups and in other subjects is not as strong and there is still too much variation. The school currently struggles to ensure that all classes are taught well. In English, performance in some Year 8 classes for example, is not as good as in other years. School leaders are fully aware of this and are working hard to improve teaching where required. The headteacher and governors make use of formal capability procedures when teachers do not make the necessary improvements.
- While some teaching still requires improvement, the introduction of a clear set of requirements for teachers' planning, increased expectations of what their students can achieve, together with improved marking and reporting on students' progress have led to greater consistency in the quality of teaching. Senior leaders check the implementation of these arrangements frequently and take action when teachers do not follow the procedures. Several teachers are on the school's 'teacher improvement plans' as a result. Regular teacher-led

professional development sessions are focused well on the key points that emerge from this monitoring. Individual teachers are directed to specific sessions that deal with areas they need to improve. The evaluation of each teacher's performance is linked closely to the achievement of the classes they teach and to the progress made by the most disadvantaged students.

- Subject leaders' checking of teaching and achievement is more frequent, rigorous and consistent. The information from these checks enables senior leaders to swiftly identify where support is required and ensure that it is put in place.
- Leaders have discussed and agreed with students through the school council a clear set of minimum expectations for students' behaviour, presentation of their work, attitudes in lessons and how they respond to teachers' marking. These expectations are now more rigorously applied. School leaders are fully aware that the poor attendance of a small group of students, including a number of those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is limiting their achievement. Staff are working hard with these students and their parents, often when the students are still in a partner primary school, to improve this situation. It is beginning to pay off.
- In the sixth form, leaders clearly identified what needed to be improved through a detailed analysis of students' achievement and the quality of teaching. Sixth form teachers now frequently check on students' progress and their teaching is better matched to individual students' needs. The attendance of sixth form students is improving. The introduction of supervised independent study has led to students being better prepared for lessons. Leaders have reviewed the sixth form curriculum and are developing it to ensure that more students are on a programme best suited to their needs.
- The report on the external review of pupil premium funding was only received recently and the school is considering the implications. In the main, it supports the actions the school is already taking.

To ensure that the school improves rapidly, senior and subject leaders must make sure that all teachers implement the key improvements consistently. In particular, all teachers need to provide subject leaders with frequent updates on students' progress against their targets and use the information to plan and teach lessons that enable all students to meet these targets.

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 local authority is providing the school with well-targeted support. It has set up a task group to support and challenge the headteacher, senior leaders and governors to help the school improve rapidly. The local authority provided support with the reviews of governance and pupil premium funding, and a review of the sixth form.

Leaders have established close links with other schools to help with specific aspects of the school's improvement. In particular, Clevedon School will work with subject leaders to strengthen the monitoring of the quality of teaching in key areas. The headteacher is fully involved with the headteacher group in South Gloucestershire. The local authority also supports the arrangements with two other schools to provide a broader sixth form curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector