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9 February 2015

Mr Philip Benaiges
Headteacher
Easingwold School
York Road
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York
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Dear Mr Benaiges

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Easingwold School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 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. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was also evaluated.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection a new assistant headteacher has been appointed to take responsibility for behaviour. New heads of science and house have also taken up post. In addition a new business manager has joined the school.

Main findings

The school was unhappy with the conduct of the section 5 inspection, in particular the judgement on the sixth form, and is still awaiting the outcome of a formal complaint. Nonetheless, leaders and staff are taking a very positive and pragmatic approach to addressing the areas for improvement that were identified. Carefully devised strategies have been introduced and key responsibilities have been reassigned. Leaders, teachers, parents and students are all focused on making Easingwold a good school.

Actions to address the areas for improvement identified at the inspection were initially added to the existing school improvement plan but work is underway to separate them out in order to make responsibilities, success criteria and milestones very clear and easy to monitor.

Senior leaders and governors are determined and resolute. They are driving initiatives forward, checking on progress and challenging where appropriate. A programme of regular learning walks and work scrutinies by both senior and middle leaders is underway to identify good practice and any concerns. Highlighted issues are addressed by faculty leaders in team meetings or with individual teachers. Data reviews keep leaders informed of students' progress and faculty leaders are responsible for addressing any under-performance. Timely meetings between middle leaders and their line manager from the senior team are a source of support but also act as a check that effective action is being taken. The views of both students and parents are also informing monitoring. An audit of the skills of middle leaders has been undertaken and professional development is in place to fill any gaps. For example, training has been given by the local authority to help middle leaders manage the difficult conversations that may be needed as they hold members of their team to account.

Work has been undertaken to make sure that leaders and teachers have reliable and clear information about the progress and attainment of students in all key stages. The data are accessible on line and detailed information about students and their progress is used increasingly by teachers when planning lessons. Teachers also have to report on any strategies they are using to address individual student's under-performance. The effectiveness of the strategies is evaluated at the next data review. Faculty leaders and the senior team use the data to identify under-performance of different groups of students or between classes taught by different teachers. These are investigated and action is taken if necessary. Tracking data for Key Stage 3 students, which has been patchy in the past, is much improved this year. Work is currently underway to streamline and standardise data reports in order to make monitoring easier and more efficient.

Training for teachers has focused on issues from the inspection. Learning walks and work scrutinies show that teachers are tailoring work more closely to the needs of

their students and the most able students are increasingly challenged and stretched. Much work has been done to develop students' behaviour for learning and higher expectations have been set. A new behaviour system has been introduced and there are definite signs of impact. Heads of house are now giving academic as well as pastoral support and closer liaison with subject teachers is benefitting students.

The formal review of the use of pupil premium has been arranged and will take place shortly but work with Roundhay School, which has an outstanding track record in using pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged students, is underway.

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 giving valuable support by providing bespoke training and independent reviews. The school also benefits from its work with six other secondary schools in the region as part of Challenge Partners. For example, subject leaders work together to standardise assessments and the Challenge Partner Reviews are both developmental and also provide an independent assessment of the progress made by the school on its journey to good.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form