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13 February 2015

Mr Andrew Taylor
Headteacher
Parkside School
Parkside Terrace
Cullingworth
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD13 5AD

Dear Mr Taylor

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Parkside School, Bradford

Following my visit to your school on 12 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 November 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 leaders, three groups of middle leaders, students, governors and representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was also evaluated.

Context

Four teachers left the school at Christmas. An English teacher and a new special educational needs coordinator joined the staff at the start of this term.

Main findings

Parkside has responded very positively and promptly to the findings of the inspection. The school was aware of many of the areas for improvement identified by the inspection team and had introduced new initiatives and systems to address the issues but these were very new and had not had time to have an impact. Extra areas for improvement identified during the inspection have been added to the school improvement plan. Progress against the milestones set out in the plan are closely monitored. Faculties have their own improvement plans that are monitored regularly and which underpin the overall school plan.

The headteacher continues to drive improvements at a well-judged pace. He has a very clear vision for the school and knows its strengths and weaknesses very well. The senior leadership team, new in September, has brought new ideas and fresh energy and had a very positive impact. Senior leaders have drive and determination and are good role models for the middle leadership team. Performance management has been strengthened since the inspection and targets are more specific and personalised. Extra support and training is given to staff if needed but when this fails leaders do not shy away from making tough decisions.

Middle leadership is getting stronger. Middle leaders are much more accountable for their areas and are rising to the challenge. Heads of faculty carry out regular learning walks and work scrutinies to monitor the quality of teaching in their areas and to plan professional development. They also set and monitor appraisal targets for their team with support from senior leaders. Leadership is becoming more devolved as middle leaders take more responsibility for driving improvement. Teachers with responsibility posts are also playing a more active role. The new special educational needs coordinator is reviewing working practices and providing any necessary professional development to staff in her area, including teaching assistants.

Data to monitor students' progress are much more reliable and easy to use. The data are based on examination questions and marking is sampled and moderated, in some cases double marked. In English, for example, where marking has been over generous in the past, the new head of faculty is using expertise from across the Bradford Partnership to make sure that grades are realistic. Reports from data reviews are used increasingly well by leaders and teachers. Teachers and tutors look at individual students' performance in order to address under-achievement quickly and leaders are looking at differences in the performance of different groups of students and developing strategies to close any gaps. Data from the latest review suggests that the achievement of Year 11 students is much improved this year.

Learning walks carried out by senior and middle leaders show that teaching is improving and students agree. Weekly staff training sessions address common areas for improvement across the school this is supplemented with faculty-based training that is more subject specific. Teachers are setting higher expectations and making more effective and widespread use of thought-provoking activities in lessons. Students say that they are stretched more and work is definitely more challenging. They also say that the quality of marking is getting better. Teaching in the sixth form is improving and is more consistent as a result of closer monitoring, professional development and promising new appointments.

The drive to improve behaviour and attendance continues unabated. Progress leaders are growing into their new role which complements that of subject teachers in tackling under-performance. They are using data to focus interventions more effectively and developing strategies to reach the most disaffected students.

Governors are closely monitoring progress against the improvement plan. Colour coded monitoring reports and the streamlined presentation of data help them identify key points for discussion. In addition, middle leaders attend governing body meetings to discuss progress and issues in their areas of responsibility. This gives governors a deeper insight into their work and also enables them to evaluate the quality of middle leadership. Governors with children at the school and/or close links with the community provide a different perspective on the improvements.

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 receiving very good support from the local authority that is tailored to meet the school's current needs and reflects its position on the journey to good. The local authority acknowledges the increasing capacity of the leadership team and no longer believes that Parkside requires the highest level of support. The school is skilled at identifying any training and support needs and the Bradford Partnership draws on best practice from across the city in order to broker bespoke, high quality support. The Bradford Partnership Reviews provide a valuable and independent view of the school's progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Bradford 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/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- For free schools, UTCs and studio schools [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school is a non-maintained special school [hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk]