

Tribal
Kings Orchard, One Queen
Street, Bristol
BS2 0HQ

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5323
Direct email: suzy.smith@tribalgroupp.com



12 February 2015

Ms Madelaine Caplin
Executive Headteacher
Woodside School
Halt Robin Road
Belvedere
DA17 6DW

Dear Ms Caplin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodside School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2013. 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:

- Strengthen middle leadership by clarifying their roles and responsibilities and providing appropriate training to ensure they become key drivers for improvement and so raise students' achievement.
- Build on the work undertaken so far to improve the learning environments across both sites to broaden pupils' horizons, support their learning and raise the aspirations of what they can achieve.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of staff at each site, Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Visits were made to classrooms at both the Halt Robin Road and Colyers Lane sites which included talking to pupils and scrutiny of their work. The school's improvement plan was evaluated alongside scrutiny of recent school review

documentation and minutes of the partnership board and the governing body meetings.

Context

Since September 2014, the school is now working in partnership with Belmont Primary School as a 'soft federation' under the leadership of an Executive Headteacher. The former headteacher retired at the end of December 2014; having worked alongside the Executive Headteacher on a part-time basis for the autumn term of 2014. She is supported at the primary school by a full time associate headteacher and two deputy headteachers at Woodside. Since the start of January 2015 a Consultant Leader is providing additional leadership support. At the end of the summer term in 2014, 15 members of staff, including five teachers, left. Permanent or long-term temporary staff cover the teaching posts. In September 2014 new Post 16 provision opened with 17 Year 12 students, all based at the Colyers Lane site. The Chair of Governors and his successor both resigned. The Vice Chair also resigned. The current Chair of Governors was already a member of the governing body but the local authority appointed the Vice Chair. Several other new appointments have strengthened the governing body, although two vacancies still remain. The partnership board has expanded to include two members of primary school governing body, including their Chair.

Main findings

Since my last visit in March 2014, the students and staff have settled into the new buildings at Colyers Lane for students with autistic spectrum disorder. However, the pace of improvement across the school slowed during the summer term. The strong and decisive leadership of the Executive Headteacher who is providing clear vision and direction for the school has reversed this decline.

A full review of the quality of teaching conducted jointly by Woodside and Belmont leaders in the autumn term showed inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remained. The Executive Headteacher and new Consultant Leader are taking rapid action to address this with relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching. Whole school training, carefully planned support and coaching for individual teachers is helping to raise the expectations of what students can achieve and broaden approaches to teaching. However, the early impact of change is more evident in classrooms at Colyers Lane and for those of secondary age with moderate learning difficulty at Halt Robin Road. In these lessons pupils are learning through projects and topic work such as planning a trip or cake baking for charity. This is enabling them to see the benefits of what they are learning, adding to their engagement and ultimately their rates of progress and self-confidence. In the primary classrooms at Halt Robin Road the teaching lacks such coherence and purpose. Here pupils' books show pupils progress varies between the stand alone pieces of work. Classroom environments are improving, particularly at Colyers Lane. However they still lack vibrancy to broaden students' horizons, inspire and effectively support their learning.

An external review of the school's strengths and areas for development has provided a firm foundation for the new three year improvement plan which covers all aspects of school life. The well-structured plan focuses sharply on raising achievement across the school and actions prioritised. Success criteria with termly milestones for the first year are incorporated to help leaders and governors track its progress. In depth reviews are under way to consider the use and deployment of staff and establish firm structures for accountability. Most middle leaders carry out their routine responsibilities of subject management and pupil care well. However, they are less effective at leading and securing improvement. This is in part due to lack of clarity and some duplication of their roles and responsibilities as well as their underdeveloped leadership skills. This needs to be addressed with greater urgency.

Staff across both sites support the review the curriculum to improve progression in learning across the school and better meet pupils' needs and aptitudes. The new post 16 provision has got off to a good start. Teaching is tailored well to students' needs, and their work already shows secure progress. However, there could be more opportunities for community and work experiences to better prepare students for the next stage of their education. Urgent work is underway to put in place a curriculum for Year 13 based on the learning experiences of the current Year 12.

In my last visit I noted that the school held extensive student performance information but leaders were not sufficiently analysing this to raise achievement. Support from senior leaders at Belmont is helping Woodside's senior leaders to make better use of data. They are now monitoring the effectiveness of interventions and using information to provide targeted support for behaviour and learning for identified students. Leaders are positive about this development, however, it is too early for the full impact to be measured.

The new Vice Chair is supporting the new Chair of Governors and bringing significant expertise and impetus to improving the governance of the school. Much higher expectations are being set of governors. The focus is now on robust challenge and support for the executive headteacher to ensure that progress is secured rapidly. The recommended external review of governance is now completed. The Vice Chair has resumed acting on the recommendations begun by the previous Chair of Governors. A governor action plan aligned to the school improvement plan is underdevelopment.

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 has continued to provide strong support for the school. The strengthened partnership board is providing more challenge in checking on the progress the school is making and to ensure the right support is put in place to increase the rate of improvement. They have responded well to requests from the

new Executive Headteacher to help her implement change. For example they have funded consultant support to help with a school review. Consultants are now working with the English and mathematics leaders to improve the curriculum and quality of teaching. It is too early for impact to be realised.

The partnership work with Belmont Primary School is growing rapidly and having a recognisable impact in improving classroom practice. For example, marking is beginning to be more constructive for pupils as a result of shared inset and teachers attending the regular 'marking clinics' held at the primary school. Support from the primary school leaders developing the leadership skills of the deputy headteachers. This has included joint observations of teaching and shared feedback to staff is help them to better hold teachers to account and improve their teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector