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23 March 2015

Mr J Crofts
Headteacher
Wilsthorpe Community School
Derby Road
Long Eaton
Nottingham
NG10 4WT

Dear Mr Crofts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wilsthorpe Community School

Following my visit to your school on 23 March 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 I held meetings with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and middle managers, students, members of the Governing Body and two representatives from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plans. Three sixth form students took me on a tour of the school.

Context

There have been no staff changes since the last inspection in November 2014.

Main findings

In partnership with other senior leaders and governors you have taken swift and appropriate action to address the areas for improvement identified during the last inspection. School improvement plans reflect key priorities and are based upon a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for development across all aspects of the school's work. However, your plans are not sufficiently clear which individuals are responsible for each action, the timescale in which they should complete the action and who will monitor the completion of each action. Nor do they indicate how the school will fully evaluate whether the actions are having the desired effect.

You and your senior staff provide the Governing Body with a wealth of useful information regarding student's performance. Governors complement this knowledge with regular visits to school and direct meetings with students. During my visit governors demonstrated a good level of understanding regarding the quality of the school and were highly reflective about their work.

The quality and consistency of teaching is improving because leaders have revised their plans for the continuing professional development of teachers so that training opportunities are more closely matched to their current professional skills and knowledge. There is now an increased rigour to teacher's performance management which includes a clear focus on the leadership skills of key staff. Senior leaders have set clear expectations for what they expect to see in lessons and curriculum area leads are now sharing their stronger practice across departments. These changes are supporting improvements in teaching.

Achievement in science is improving due to the rigorous approach to improvement being taken by the head of science and assistant headteacher responsible for this area of work. The higher expectations of the science department staff are starting to have a significant impact on improving outcomes for students. The head of science has an accurate view about the next steps the science department needs to take in order for student's achievement to be good. Rigorous leadership has led to improvements in teaching and the tracking of student progress and as a result, pupils are now doing much better at this subject.

Prior to the last inspection you and your senior leaders and governors correctly identified that aspects of the sixth form could improve and that the entry criteria and courses on offer were not always appropriate. During this academic year sixth form leaders have successfully worked to improve the students' attendance and punctuality. The sixth form progress manager has ensured that sixth form students get access to assemblies and revision seminars which promote a strong work ethos and the necessary skills to gain successful examination results.

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 provides effective support to the school, which includes a link advisor who has worked with senior staff and governors to support and challenge the school improvement planning process. Recently the local authority has brokered support by an appropriately skilled consultant to develop the quality of middle leadership across the school. This work is already providing senior leaders with the necessary information they need to support these key staff. Senior leaders and governors have also drawn support from a local teaching school and a National Leader of Education. This work has strengthened the quality of teaching in science and whole school leadership.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Harrison
Associate Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk