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Mr W Carpenter
Headteacher
High Well School
Rook Hill Road
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West Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Carpenter

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to High Well School

Following my visit to your school on 12 November 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 March 2015. 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 in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other school leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke with pupils, teachers and other staff. I reviewed progress, attendance and behaviour information. The school's improvement plans were evaluated. I visited three classes and examined the work in pupils' books.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection which judged the school to require improvement, the school has relocated to newly refurbished facilities in Pontefract. Several new

appointments have been made. The deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher in April 2015. The executive headteacher provides additional leadership support at the school for three days a week. Two teachers joined the school in September 2015. A new Chair of the Governing Body was elected in July 2015. One senior leader and a teacher have left the school.

Main findings

Revisions to the roles of senior staff and the creation of new roles to lead the teaching of mathematics, reading and writing and to coordinate special educational needs have been quickly implemented. Training and support is in place to develop leadership. Consequently, new leaders are confidently getting to grips with their responsibilities.

It is clear from observing lessons, examining pupils' books and talking to staff and pupils that generally, there is a greater focus on assessing what pupils can do, marking work and providing feedback to pupils. Pupils are starting to discuss their work more with staff and respond to written feedback. Teachers are creating more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing skills in English and other subjects. This is underpinned by training, regular checks and feedback to teachers to challenge and support them in improving their work to meet the standards the school expects.

Together with governors you have taken swift action since the previous inspection to improve accommodation and resources. The move to new accommodation, several miles from the previous site, has been managed well. Pupils are starting to benefit from a safe and secure environment and access to a wider range of resources to support their learning. Most pupils are starting to respond to the higher expectations that staff have of them. However, at this stage there are some barriers and inconsistencies in the attendance and behaviour of a small number of pupils that are affecting their learning and progress. Suitable plans and strategies have been drawn up to challenge entrenched poor attitudes to learning and pupils' reluctance to attend school regularly. However, they have yet to fully take effect. The way in which staff use 'chill out' and 'seclusion' rooms when dealing with very disruptive behaviour by pupils, in exceptional circumstances, and regular planned use of such rooms is inconsistent. The school does not have a clear policy regarding the use of these rooms although records show that they are increasingly used to manage pupils' behaviour.

The school's action plan covers all the areas for improvement. Governors are monitoring its implementation carefully and recognise very clearly where and how the school needs to improve further. Opportunities to strengthen governors' oversight of the work to improve behaviour and attendance are due to be discussed and implemented in a few weeks.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. In the meantime, the school should email a termly progress report to me.

External support

The local authority has much confidence in school leaders and governors and high expectations of them to quickly improve the outcomes for pupils. Extensive support, both financially and through specialist advice, has enabled school leaders to improve the quality of accommodation. The impact of this investment is not fully evident in pupils' attendance and progress. In consultation with the local authority, the school has identified additional partners to support its drive for further improvement. Joint work is planned with a local partnership of special schools and pupil referral units, a school improvement partner, and an education welfare team to support developments in teaching and assessment, leadership and attendance.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wakefield local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector