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23 October 2015

Mr RJM McCowan  
Headteacher  
Baines School  
Highcross Road  
Poulton-le-Fylde  
Lancashire  
FY6 8BE

Dear Mr McCowan

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Baines School**

Following my visit to your school on 9 October 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 May 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, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, students, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection five full-time teachers have left the school and seven have been appointed in science, English, computing, modern foreign languages, religious studies and mathematics.

## **Main findings**

Since the section 5 inspection actions taken by senior leaders, governors and staff demonstrate a clear commitment to improvement. Actions highlighted in the school's 'Securing Good Plan' are underway and some early milestones have been met. Leaders have prioritised the areas for development indicated in the inspection report and external support has been sought to accelerate the pace of change.

Levels of progress in English literature show signs of improvement and there are significant improvements in the progress made by students taking core and additional science. However, despite a positive trend, students are still not making sufficient progress in English language and too few are gaining the higher levels in additional science.

The school has rightly made the rates of progress of the most-able learners a key priority. Departmental strategies are in place but their implementation is too recent to show signs of impact.

The school is beginning to address the issue of how effectively teachers are using information from the assessment of students' progress to better meet their needs. A 'Securing Good' group of teachers from across the school are engaged in a range of activities to model best practice. The students I met with said that they had noticed a greater emphasis on meeting individual needs by the fact that some teachers were now planning different tasks for different students. The school is yet to roll out its strategies to address the underachievement of boys across the range of subjects and it is too early to judge whether the work being undertaken in English relating to boys' performance is having a positive impact.

Students report that the presentation of their work is now a very strong focus with clear rewards and sanctions linked to this, although inconsistencies remain in the way that teachers apply the rewards and sanctions policy.

Leaders are now committed to more effective and frequent evaluation of the impact on achievement of their own and others' work. This includes: work scrutiny, departmental assessment reviews, new leadership monitoring schedules, enhanced learning walks, dedicated professional development time to signpost good and outstanding practice, middle leader evaluation of monitoring processes and their impact, more robust systems for appraisal, and an assessment of the impact of the marking policy. It is, however, too early to judge the impact of these initiatives on students' outcomes.

Governors and senior leaders are confident that all heads of department are now fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and have demonstrated this through their ability to present information about students' progress in a more precise and focused form.

Attendance was an area for improvement at the last inspection. The school has undertaken a number of initiatives including the introduction of an improved attendance tracking tool, having attendance data as a standard agenda item at weekly pastoral meetings, improved parental contact with the attendance officer and a greater emphasis on attendance rewards. This has resulted in current data showing an improvement on 2013 and 2014 figures, which are now above the school's target and above national figures.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

Since the last inspection a range of activities have been brokered by the local authority to support the actions in the Securing Good Plan. These include:

- linking with the head of a local outstanding school with a very similar intake to focus on improving teaching and learning and to include moderation of assessments by teachers across the schools
- subject-specific support for English from an English adviser and through the department's involvement in local authority subject-specific projects
- plans for a subject review of Key Stage 3 science by a science specialist adviser
- support from an attendance consultant
- a further review of the use of the pupil premium fund and its impact
- a planned review of the effectiveness of governance in November 2015.

### **Next steps for the school:**

- further improve the effectiveness of middle leaders in ensuring their monitoring and evaluation of teaching in their departments has a positive impact on students' progress
- further improve the progress that students make in English language and additional science, particularly at the higher levels.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**