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Mr Neil Miller
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Miller

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Burwood School

Following my visit to your school on 22 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 the interim executive board 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 you, the head of school, other leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The inspector evaluated the school development plan, observed learning in lessons and spoke to pupils and staff informally around the school. A range of documents were scrutinised, which included information on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, school policies and procedures and records of meetings.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection, the school has experienced a number of strategic staffing changes. Both the consultant headteacher and the Chair of the Interim Executive Board resigned at the end of the summer. The head of school remains in post. A new substantive headteacher, supported by a national leader of education, and a new Chair of the Interim Executive Board were appointed in September. The school has completed a consultation to join the Bromley Education Trust in December 2015.

Main findings

Since joining the school, you and the head of school have reviewed the school's progress with diligence. You have considered the areas for development from the last inspection to provide a detailed plan to improve the school. The plan addresses the key priorities. You and your leadership team have made an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Consequently, your recognition of the need to address matters with urgency has impacted positively.

Your rapid action, supported by the head of school, has provided a structure to a school that was previously unstable. Pupils now arrive by organised transport. Staff welcome the pupils and undertake checks to support their personal safety, welfare and development. Your staff actively engage with pupils when they arrive. The breakfast club is a welcomed activity by all. It provides a calm and supportive start for the day ahead.

Leaders' clear guidance and support for teaching has enabled staff to galvanise their daily approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Staff plan well for learning, and consider both individual needs and the progress of all pupils. As a result, pupils respond well to the wider learning support and behaviour mentoring they are now receiving. They have positive relationships with staff in their lessons. Pupils reported to the inspector that they appreciate the teachers who relate to them as individuals. Pupils also reported they feel calmer and are able to achieve well. For example, a student in a vocational lesson described to the inspector how he was supported in his learning. In an English lesson, another student shared his completed 'horror story' with the inspector and could describe how he used adjectives to further progress his creative writing.

Teachers have been challenged and held to account through robust monitoring systems. Leaders embark on regular observations and scrutinise pupils' work. They rightly gauge the performance of the staff they manage. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved across the school. Pupils' outcomes are now monitored carefully and teachers have a clear system to track progress.

You and your leadership team have recognised the priority to raise attendance and reduce the number of exclusions. Leaders have undertaken significant work in

engaging with families. A home tutor, together with additional local authority welfare support, has improved relationships with hard-to-reach families. As a result, pupils' attendance has substantially increased and the number of exclusions is much lower than the same period last year.

Middle leaders have developed their roles within the school. Literacy and numeracy leaders have implemented structured schemes to expand pupils' number and reading skills. Resourcing the library and introducing a reading scheme has been a positive development. The reading skills of all pupils are now closely monitored and analysed well. Consequently, pupils show enthusiasm for improving their literacy skills. Pupils now read books appropriate to their reading age. In mathematics, pupils are confident in engaging with problem-solving activities. As a result, pupils are challenged to deepen their numeracy skills.

Your clear aspiration to raise standards and develop wider school support through the national leader of education and local partner schools have impacted well. However, you recognise that the challenge to continue to improve is ongoing. You have prioritised the developmental needs of the school accurately, and challenge leaders to replicate your tenacious drive for success. For example, following your request in August 2015 to the Department for Education, your stringent action has ensured the pupil premium review is taking place at the earliest opportunity. Your expectation has been for leaders to complete an internal review of the impact of the spending of additional funding before half-term.

You are confident in the action you and your staff have taken to raise outcomes for pupils. However, you are not complacent. You have set a realistic but challenging target to continue your drive for improvement. Consequently, you have introduced a progress review for all teachers in order to evaluate the impact of action against the outcomes for pupils. This will support a further evaluation of the vocational curriculum.

The interim executive board has strengthened its challenge to the school. The Chair of the Interim Executive Board has a thorough understanding of the areas for development that the school must address. She ensures the board fulfil their duties, including that of safeguarding. As a result, substantial improvements in the school environment and infrastructure to promote the health and safety of pupils and staff have been completed. The building has new doors with a much more effective locking system and the external site is secure.

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

The local authority has continued to challenge and support the school. It has provided expertise to assist leaders in reviewing recent legislation changes in special educational needs and supported additional funding for developing resources. The local authority officers have representation on the interim executive board. This facilitates strategic developments, which are then closely monitored. The interim executive board is provided with a perspective to challenge and drive further improvements. It is providing guidance as the school continues its transition towards a trust partnership.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for the London Borough of Bromley.

Yours sincerely

John Lambern

Her Majesty's Inspector