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Mr Neil Wilkinson
Bemrose School
Uttoxeter New Road
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Derbyshire
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Dear Mr Wilkinson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bemrose School

Following my visit to your school on 27 May 2016, 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 December 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.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the reviews of governance and arrangements for the effective use of the pupil premium grant are undertaken as soon as possible
- ensure that the provision you make for pupils joining the school is reviewed and revised so that they can make good progress as soon as possible and attain as well as other pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the school's senior leadership team, a group of teachers, pupils and students, a representative of the local authority and two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I evaluated the school's action plan and reviewed the school's self-evaluation documentation. You and I visited classrooms and learning areas to observe teaching, to talk to pupils and to look at pupils' work. I also scrutinised a range of documentation including a sample of the minutes of the governing body.

Context

Since the last inspection, the number of pupils on roll has risen by 120 and you expect the Year 7 to be full in September 2016. Both you and governors were keen to share with me the challenges, including the funding shortfall, this presents.

There have been a number of changes to the staff of the school and you have revised the staffing structure. You have appointed three teachers an early years lead, a head of mathematics and a head of humanities. You have also recently appointed seven pupils' progress leads who will be, from September 2016, responsible for ensuring that all pupils make good progress and attain as well as other pupils nationally. In total, four teachers have resigned since your last inspection, two of whom have already left and two who will leave at the end of this term.

Recent building work to refurbish the sports hall has been completed but building work on a new subject block is due to start shortly and you expect the new building to be ready for September 2017.

Both you and the chair of the governing body explained that you are exploring a range of options related to becoming an academy, and that you expect to have selected your preferred option early next term.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have responded promptly to address the areas for improvement set out in your recent inspection report. With support from the local authority, you have drawn up an effective school improvement plan that clearly sets out what needs to be done, when, by whom, the resource implications and who will check that it has been completed. However, the success criteria are not sufficiently focused on the impact of actions in terms of improving pupils' outcomes or standards of teaching.

The plan appropriately includes elements focused on improving teaching and strengthening leadership and management by ensuring that middle leaders quickly develop the expectations and skills they need. This work is under way and all staff are already clear that they are accountable for the quality of their teaching and the outcomes of the pupils. You have also acted promptly and appropriately to improve provision and standards in the early years, including the appointment of a new early years lead. Governors hold you to account effectively for the implementation of the school improvement plan and challenge you appropriately. However, they could do this more effectively if success criteria focused more on the impact on standards. Governors have not yet finalised the arrangements for the review of governance and have not yet begun the review of the pupil premium.

Since the last inspection, leaders have revised the arrangements for holding teachers and middle leaders to account for the standards achieved by pupils. These arrangements are much more effective and there is little room for ambiguity. You have also provided middle leaders with effective support and have enabled them to begin to develop their effectiveness. Regular monitoring and feedback from middle leaders support the formal performance management processes. This has been well received by staff who find the feedback and subsequent targets more manageable, relevant and achievable.

You evaluate pupils' performance information to track the progress of pupils at a variety of levels and a range of ways from cohort to subject, to group to pupil. This enables you to hold teachers and middle leaders to account effectively and enables governors to hold you to account. However, teachers do not use this information consistently to identify gaps in pupils' understanding or to inform their next steps in learning.

A large proportion of pupils, many with additional needs, join the school during the school year and this presents you with a number of challenges. You agreed that the arrangements you make to admit and induct the new pupils is an area that needs to be developed further if:

- they are to settle into school quickly
- there are needs to be identified promptly and accurately
- support is to be put in place at the earliest opportunity so that they can make good progress and attain in line with other pupils.

You have also taken prompt action to improve pupils' behaviour. Both staff and pupils spoke of the positive impact that the 'golden rules' have had on behaviour in class and around school. As a result, the behaviour I observed was mostly good and in the classrooms we visited, most children were engaged in their learning. You are aware that on occasion pupils' behaviour outside school is not good. When this is brought to your attention, you do your best to investigate it and if possible follow

up with the individual pupils. When this is not possible, you remind the whole school about how they are expected to behave. You then feed back to the complainant. I sampled the arrangements you have for safeguarding. Leaders have ensured that teachers and governors I spoke with were appropriately trained. The staff know what they should be looking for and what to do if they have any concerns. The governors I spoke with know who the safeguarding governor is and said that they received regular reports from the safeguarding lead.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support to the school including advice and guidance to leaders and governors. It has also assisted in helping the school to make key appointments and by arranging school-to-school support.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derby. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Derek Myers
Her Majesty's Inspector