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26 September 2016

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Dear Mr John

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Acland Burghley School

Following my visit to your school on 16 September 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 February 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in February 2016, 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 in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that consistently high-quality teaching enables all pupils to make substantial progress from their starting points
- support middle leaders to deliver the actions identified in the school development plan.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, associate headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, pupils and two representatives of the local authority. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Short visits were made to lessons in mathematics and English.

Context

A new headteacher joined the school in September 2015. In the four terms he has been in post, significant staffing restructures, curriculum changes and a focus on improving pupils' attitudes to learning have resulted in a changed ethos and culture throughout the school. The governing body and local authority are fully supportive of the new headteacher, the senior leadership team and their vision for further school improvement.

Main findings

In a short space of time the new headteacher has been instrumental in delivering significant improvements. The restructured senior leadership team has a shared vision of the high quality of education that they intend to provide at Acland Burghley and a clear plan to address any potential barriers. There is a clear sense of urgency and purpose to their endeavours and, as such, there have already been demonstrable improvements. Performance management arrangements are robust and there are now clear lines of accountability. The headteacher has made key appointments, particularly at middle leadership level, and reassigned the roles and responsibilities of key leaders. The recruitment of high-quality teaching staff complements the whole-school focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum.

School leaders have prioritised improving teaching and learning in mathematics. A capable and cohesive team is now in place, supported by a range of external support, to accelerate developments within the department. As a result, pupils' mathematical confidence has grown. However, leaders are not complacent. They know that poor teaching over time may have resulted in gaps in some pupils' knowledge and understanding. Robust and regular assessment enables the department to plug any such gaps or misconceptions.

Higher expectations in relation to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are now evident. Senior and middle leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and feedback given to pupils about how they can improve their work. Assessments are regular and detailed and are used to inform teachers' planning. The school's

'flying start' programme, which began in June, added renewed energy to the academic year and eased pupils' transition into their new year group. Teachers know their pupils well and plan accordingly.

Pupils' attitudes to learning continue to improve. Staff encourage pupils to self-regulate their behaviour and support them to understand when it prevents them or others from learning. Conduct around the large school site is orderly. New Year 7 pupils described the effective support they received so that they could quickly settle into school life.

I am pleased to confirm that senior leaders and governors are taking effective action. However, school leaders know that there is still much to do to ensure that all pupils and groups of pupils make substantial progress from their starting points. While information provided by school leaders indicates that improvements were made in 2016, clearly there is more to be done if the school is to be considered good at its next inspection. A whole-school focus on improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly the White British, is beginning to have an impact.

External support

The local authority has provided consistently good challenge and support. It has brokered a plethora of external support to address specific areas of development, supported the governing body in appointing the new headteacher and regularly reviews the impact of its actions on school improvement. The local authority is confident that school leaders have the capacity and capability to make the necessary school improvements.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector