

13 May 2010

Ms Sarah Barnes
Bellingham Middle School and Sports College
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Dear Ms Barnes

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 May 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit.

As a result of the inspection on 23–24 September 2009, the governing body was asked to develop a clear and coherent strategy for evaluating and monitoring the work of the school and ensuring self-evaluation was accurate. The school was asked to improve assessment procedures by developing more robust evaluations of the impact of teaching on learning and by improving systems to record pupils' performance in all subjects. Since the inspection, the governing body has been restructured and enlarged. A new chair and two vice chairs have been appointed and are part of an executive which includes the acting headteacher, a consultant head, the local authority senior adviser and the School Improvement Partner.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The system used to monitor how well pupils are doing in English and mathematics has been expanded to take information about attainment and achievement in all subjects into account. Pupils' performance is more rigorously analysed and the school recognises some boys are underachieving. Data on pupils' performance in all subjects are monitored every half term to identify underachievement including those pupils with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties and disabilities.

Evaluations of the impact of teaching on learning show steady improvement. The school has confirmed its accuracy using external headteachers and senior staff from the partnership of schools. Local authority consultants have supported the changes made to assessment procedures, which has improved the understanding of staff to



assess pupils' work accurately. Judgements are moderated by teachers in the school, the local authority, and the partnership of schools: these rightly find that assessment practice is best in the core subjects and physical education. This reflects the impact of specialist sports college status which is helping to improve the overall effectiveness of the school.

The effectiveness of the governing body has improved and governors are aware there is much to be done. Their role in challenging and holding the school to account has been strengthened and monitoring of the school's performance is more rigorous. The strategy for the evaluation and monitoring of the work of the school is clear and coherent. A review of systems and practice has resulted in significant change, which is starting to make an impact. For example, new committees are changing the staffing structure, contracts and job descriptions. Governors are effectively involved in the self-evaluation process following training by the local authority.

Information from monitoring is now of sufficient quality to maintain accurate self-evaluation of the school's performance. The governing body is taking appropriate action to ensure it fulfils requirements; for example, by complying with duties under the disability and sexual discrimination acts. The consultant headteacher and School Improvement Partner are working effectively with the senior leadership team and governors to make sure the school moves in the right direction. They recognise there is still some way to go and plans to quicken the pace, for example by appointing a permanent headteacher, are in place. The local authority's statement of action and action plan, which fulfilled requirements, and the support they have provided has made a good impact. It is significantly helping to build the capacity of the school to sustain improvement without support.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

