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12 June 2013

Mrs Cath Piercy
Headteacher
Aigburth High School
Minehead Road
Aigburth
Liverpool
L17 6AX

Dear Mrs Piercy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Aigburth High School, Liverpool

Following my visit with Drew Crawshaw, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 11 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, students, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. During our visit, we examined a range of documentation, including information on students' current progress and minutes of meetings held with the local authority to help the school to improve.

Context

The school has appointed a new head of mathematics who will be in post from September 2013.

Main findings

The previous inspection provided further impetus for you to proceed apace with your dynamic programme for transformation of this school. You are perfectly frank in your assessment of what challenges the school still faces but you are determined not to let such obstacles stand in the way of the school quickly becoming, at the very least, a good school. The action plan that you have drawn up is clear, straightforward and fit for the purpose of driving the school forward.

Recently established systems for checking on students' progress have become much more part of the life of the school. Teachers now use this information to plan lessons that better meet the needs of individual students and also to provide support for students who are underachieving. The school has a much clearer picture of how well students are doing. When students are found to be falling behind, teachers are now required to step in and ensure that students make the progress they should be making.

High expectations are reflected in procedures to link teachers' pay and rewards to pupils' progress. The school's system for setting targets for teachers is now very clearly linked to school improvement. School leaders have sent out a very clear message to staff that the underperformance of pupils will not be tolerated. In addition the introduction of the 'return to work' interview has helped to improve staff attendance, providing a more stable environment for the students. This is helping to make teaching and learning support to be more consistently of good quality.

Training for middle leaders has helped to raise awareness of the importance of their role in driving improvements and checking that the teaching of their subject is up to scratch. In addition training for learning support officers has reinforced a sense of professionalism in these colleagues, increasing their aspirations and motivation.

Governors are equally up for the challenge to turn Aigburth High School into a good school; in fact, as the Chair of the Governing Body exclaimed to me: 'Good? We want to be an outstanding school within two years, let alone good!' The Governing Body now makes sure that the school acts on the recommendations made in the inspection report, for example, by empowering individual governors to check regularly on the school's progress in tackling the areas for improvement. Governors have welcomed this role in holding the school sharply to account. They now have a clearer idea of what the pupil premium funding has been spent on but they cannot yet give a straightforward account of what sort of impact this has had on students' achievement.

Links with other outstanding and good schools have been established. These are proving to be very useful, providing tailored support that is well-suited to the specific needs of the school. Students spoke positively of the improvements they had noticed. They were enthusiastic about the school and their individual achievements, of which they are justly proud.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- use examples of good practice in assessment in other schools to ensure that information on students' progress is accurate and reliable
- embed further initiatives to develop literacy and numeracy across the school
- make sure that governors challenge the school to show that funds for the pupil premium have had a positive effect on the achievement of students eligible for this funding.

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

External support

Support from the local authority has helped school leaders to sort out underperforming teachers and to provide training for staff. Monthly 'Challenge Board' meetings check up on how successfully the school is tackling the areas for improvement. The local authority's plans to rebuild the school will be of immense help in moving the school forward, as the present accommodation is not fit for purpose and is not conducive to encouraging the best behaviour from all students. The local authority has also entered into productive dialogue with the school so that in future the school will only have to admit those students whose needs in learning and managing behaviour it is in a position to meet.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool and as below.

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority - including where the school is an academy
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.