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10 September 2013

Sally Newman
Headteacher
William Morris School
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Banbury
Oxfordshire
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Dear Mrs Newman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to William Morris School

Following my visit to your school on 10 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- monitor and evaluate in more detail the impact middle leaders have on pupils' achievement.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, leaders responsible for improving writing and mathematics, two governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I looked at some examples of pupils' work and teachers' marking,

records of lesson observations by school leaders, the school's information about pupils' achievement, and materials from training sessions for teachers that have taken place since the inspection. You showed me around the school and we visited every class to see the pupils at work.

Main findings

Leaders, under the clear direction of the headteacher, have acted quickly to address weaker teaching. As a result, teaching is improving and a higher proportion is consistently good. Pupils are beginning to make better progress, particularly in reading and writing. All teachers have received training so that they are clear about the specific elements of good teaching. The best practice in the school is being shared more regularly and effectively. Where necessary, some teachers have had targeted support from leaders, for example to improve the teaching of writing. Teachers' marking and feedback to pupils is getting better and pupils are now more aware of what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers are making better use of information about pupils' achievement to plan lessons that challenge all pupils. Pupils have more opportunities to learn independently. They also have more opportunities to develop their literacy skills in a wider range of subjects.

Middle leaders' roles and responsibilities are more sharply defined. For example, the leader responsible for mathematics works with teachers to improve lesson planning and the teaching of mathematics. Middle leaders regularly make sure that teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate so that work in lessons is well-matched to pupils' needs. However, the process for evaluating the impact of the work of these leaders on pupils' achievement needs to be clearer.

Governors continue to provide strong challenge and support for the school. They were fully involved in creating the current school improvement plan. This plan addresses the areas for improvement arising from the inspection effectively and includes appropriate and detailed targets for raising pupils' achievement. Governors have a clearly defined role in evaluating improvements, including visiting the school to collect first-hand evidence.

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

The local authority is providing effective support for the school. The school improvement leader has played a key role in helping to create an effective improvement plan that has ambitious but realistic targets. He has provided training for teachers and he now has a substantial role in regularly monitoring the school's progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes

Her Majesty's Inspector