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15 October 2013

Colette Singleton  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ravens Wood School  
Oakley Road  
Bromley  
BR2 8HP

Dear Mrs Singleton

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ravens Wood School**

Following my visit to your academy on 15 October 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. 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. The academy should take further action to:

- strengthen the post-Ofsted Action plan and academy development plan to include more detailed targets for student groups and specific dates when leaders and governors can evaluate the impact of these improvement plans
- devise a strategic action plan for developing better governance and ensure all governors ask challenging questions about the impact of pupil premium funding.

## **Evidence**

During my visit I held meetings with you and senior leaders and representatives of the governing body. I evaluated your post-Ofsted action plan, your academy development plan, information about developments in teaching, monitoring of teachers' work including their marking, and information about students' achievement. I visited lessons with you and three senior leaders to observe teaching and the quality of students' work.

## **Context**

At the time of my visit the Principal was absent and in your capacity as Chief Executive Officer you are working with senior leaders to lead improvements. Since the inspection in June, 18 teachers have left the school and 15 new teachers joined in September, including four newly qualified teachers.

## **Main findings**

As the new Chief Executive Officer you are guiding the Principal and senior leaders effectively so that Ravens Wood can quickly become a good academy. Senior leaders are passionate about securing purposeful and sustainable improvement. Leaders have avoided making rash quick fixes. Decisions are taken which ensure improvements to teaching are at the heart of the improvement journey.

Senior leaders are considering carefully how to help teachers improve their planning, teaching and marking. Through a well-focused review senior leaders have put in place a coherent range of teaching and learning documents and a strategy to help develop middle leaders' capacity to assess teaching. The four-step action plan to improve the quality of teaching is good. It gives a clear visual map of the sequence of activities and review points. Through regular visits to lessons and a cycle of joint observations with middle leaders, you are developing their practice as observers. Senior leaders are sharpening their practice as coaches by working with an external consultant. The impact of this work is starting to emerge in the quality of feedback from observers to teachers.

The new form for the pre-observation meeting, the lesson plan format, and the teaching observation form are of a very high quality. There is a well-planned support process linking the quality of teaching to managing staff performance. Piloting this model has ensured that you can refine this before you roll out the model across the academy after the October half term. The audit of the quality of marking across departments provides a clear picture of strengths and areas needing urgent improvement. The new assessment grid used by teachers and students is starting to help them judge achievements and set targets.

Scrutiny of students' books reveals a mixed picture. Commentary from teachers and students' own assessment is not always deepening their subject knowledge. The lack of constructive feedback is slowing some students' progress. Some students take pride in their work with neat presentation, good responses to homework tasks and an evident commitment to improving their subject knowledge. However, in some books work is poorly presented, unfinished and does not show a level of scholarship which many are able to achieve. A few students are not responding to what teachers have asked them to improve. For some students their discipline that supports their success in sports and the performing arts is not evident in their academic study.

Senior leaders are developing a more robust system for collating and analysing achievement data. While the system is in its early stages, leaders' ability to use this to filter data about students' progress is developing rapidly.

The post-Ofsted action plan and academy development plan are addressing the areas needing improvement, with clear responsibilities and interim milestones. There is some overlap. The plans could be better aligned or subsumed into one plan. More specific achievement targets are needed, especially for more able students and those eligible for the pupil premium.

Governors are highly ambitious for the academy. They have a good understanding of what needs improving, what is changing and how the impact of changes will be tested. Governors are pleased with the improving quality of information about students' achievements. Governors are becoming more demanding in questioning the progress of groups against national expectations but are not sharp enough in their focus on the impact of pupil premium funding. There is increased accountability at department levels and governors are more demanding of middle leaders. We agreed that it would be beneficial to establish a robust action plan to strengthen governance.

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

### **External support**

Senior leaders have been proactive in visiting schools with outstanding teaching and leadership and have used these visits to review how teaching is developed at Ravens Wood. In addition, senior leaders have been highly receptive to advice and guidance from an external consultant. This is deepening their understanding of how to monitor and judge the impact of teaching over time and coach other leaders in how to improve the quality of teaching in the academy.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Bromley, the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**