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Mr John Dyson
Executive Headteacher
Woodlands School
Beechdale Road
Aspley
Nottingham
NG8 3EZ

Dear Mr Dyson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodlands School

Following my visit to your school on 6 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 January 2014. 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 school should take further action to:

- sharpen the school's improvement plan to ensure that the timescales for all actions to be taken are clearly defined
- ensure that a senior leader and representatives of the governing body attend a regional Ofsted 'Better Governance' conference, to support the further improvement of the skills of the governing body.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the head of school and other leaders, a representative of the local authority, and with representatives of the governing body, including the Chair, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated, and a number of other documents were checked, including the outcomes of leaders' monitoring activities. The head of school

accompanied me on a tour of the school, which included brief visits to all classes, to observe pupils while they were learning.

Main findings

You, your senior leaders and governors have worked with determination to tackle the areas identified for improvement at the time of your last inspection. You have identified a range of suitable actions to address the school's weaknesses and have worked effectively with staff to build these into a new school improvement plan. The plan includes clear success criteria to enable senior leaders and governors to check whether actions are successful in supporting improved outcomes for pupils. The plan also includes timescales for actions to be completed in. While some of these timescales are suitable, some are not specific enough to enable leaders and governors to check whether actions are on track. You agreed to sharpen the timescales in the plan and submit your amended plan to me by 20 May 2014.

You, and other leaders, are checking on the quality of teaching more frequently. For example, through lesson observations, checks on work in pupils' books, and by holding half-termly reviews to check data on pupils' progress in different subjects with their teachers. This is helping to give leaders a more accurate view about the quality of teaching across the school. As a result of this work, you have been able to identify how each teacher can improve their work. During my visit, we discussed the importance of checking rigorously to ensure that teachers always address their development points. We also discussed the importance of taking increased consideration of any training or support needs teachers may have, in order to achieve their development points. Your monitoring of teaching indicates that teachers are beginning to use data about pupils' achievement more effectively, to identify an appropriate level of challenge for pupils in lessons.

There are signs that your strategies to improve pupils' behaviour are making a positive impact. Your revised behaviour management strategies ensure there is an expectation that pupils will catch up for any learning they have missed through poor behaviour. Pupils explained that they have to 'make up minutes' of learning they lose, during their own time. There are also early indications that your actions to improve pupils' attendance are making a positive impact. Attendance is much improved on the same period in the previous academic year, and continues to improve. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has also fallen since last year.

Your leadership team is combining analysis of school data on pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance more effectively than previously. This is helping to ensure that leaders have a more rounded view of the school's overall effectiveness, and are able to identify emerging areas for development more efficiently. Leaders' analysis of pupils' behaviour patterns is more detailed than previously. During my visit, we discussed how tracking of pupils' behaviour patterns could be further improved to

track behavioural trends. I recommended a local school you could approach to observe good practice in this area

The governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are experienced and are also keen to develop their skills further. During my visit, we agreed that it would be beneficial for a senior leader to attend an Ofsted 'Better Governance' seminar, with representatives of the governing body.

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

School leaders and governors report that the quality of support received from the local authority has been variable. Support received from the local authority 'governor services' department has been well received, and staff value the discussions they have with other schools through local authority forum meetings. During the visit, governors informed me that they are in the process of seeking an external professional, with experience in special educational needs (SEND) provision, to help them to ensure that they are as effective as possible in holding leaders to account.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Nottingham local authority.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector