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17 April 2015

Mr Andy Ireland
Headteacher
Westfield School
Eckington Road
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Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S20 1HQ

Dear Mr Ireland

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Westfield School, Sheffield

Following my visit to your school on 16 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 December 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- further develop provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs so that pupils' individual needs are fully met. In particular, develop the quality of help provided for those pupils in Year 7 who enter the school with weaker basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics
- ensure senior and middle leaders know what teaching is typically like on a day to day basis. Ensure any teaching that is typically less than good is supported and challenged robustly

- ensure all teachers fully comply with the school's revised marking policy.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders; the special educational needs coordinators; faculty leaders for English and mathematics; the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school's plans for improvement, scrutinised the single central record and considered a range of other documents including pupil progress data and minutes of governing body meetings. I also looked at a sample of pupils' work from a broad range of subjects.

Context

Since the school was last inspected there have been some minor changes to the faculty structure. A deputy headteacher has assumed responsibilities for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

Main findings

Between February 2013 and December 2014 the school did not improve sufficiently to become a good school. This was because inconsistencies in the quality of teaching were not fully addressed and pupils did not attain well enough in a number of subjects. In particular, some groups of pupils including the most able, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs did not make enough progress and underachieved. Since the last inspection, you have put in place new strategic plans for improvement that address these issues and have strengthened planning at faculty level. Improvement planning is therefore tighter and more consistent. You have also reviewed the way senior leaders line manage middle leaders and adopted a more rigorous approach. Behind these developments is a determination to use data on pupil progress more effectively.

The decline in examination results in 2014 was not fully anticipated. As a result, much has been done to check the accuracy of ongoing assessments this year. Senior leaders expect attainment in examination results to rise in 2015, as pupils across key Stage 4 are making better progress.

Senior and middle leaders have improved the way they check on the quality of teaching. Leaders now take more account of the work in pupils' books and of data on the progress pupils make across the year. Recent internal and external reviews of teaching indicate a positive picture, with most teaching being of a good or better standard. However, arrangements for observing teachers are timetabled in advance. Consequently, leaders may not get to see what is typical of the day to day quality of teaching.

A revised policy has been introduced for marking and assessment. Teachers are now required to mark pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar and pupils are expected to make the necessary corrections. Initial checks have shown some teachers do not yet comply with the policy. Further work needs to be done to ensure all teachers develop this practice and sustain the approach so that it establishes a culture amongst pupils of making improvements in response to teachers' comments.

The school's provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is now being led and managed more effectively. A deputy headteacher is now in charge and being well supported by a special needs coordinator who works across the family of schools. Together they have completed a thorough review of provision and put in place a detailed plan which is already having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Due to changes in working patterns, the morale of teaching assistants is rising because they are clearer about their role and what is expected of them. Their performance is being checked more regularly and their training needs are now being met. Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) have also had their responsibilities clarified. The team now use data effectively to check whether or not the support they provide is having an impact on pupils' progress. This data shows disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in Key Stage 4 are on course to attain standards in line with those seen nationally. The quality of provision in Key Stage 3 is also developing. New programmes that support literacy have been introduced, and there are some early signs of success. However, you accept more needs to be done to support those pupils who enter the school with lower levels of attainment or with specific learning needs so that they catch up quickly.

In the past, the most able students in the school have not made enough progress in English and mathematics, and the proportion of students attaining top grades at GCSE has been relatively low in a number of subjects. Senior leaders have provided training on this issue and ensured it has been a focus of checks on teachers' planning. Targets set for the most able pupils are now more ambitious. Current predictions for the achievement of the most able pupils in the current Year 11 suggest more pupils are making expected progress, although not enough, as yet, make good progress.

The governors continue to take an active role in checking on the school's progress. Governors have well developed links with faculty leaders and appropriate forums in place to hold leaders and managers accountable. However, governors are less knowledgeable about the progress of specific groups of pupils and need to ensure this remains a high priority. In particular, governors need to check that lessons fully challenge the most able pupils, and that disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive additional support tailored to their needs.

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

External support

The school has established a number of links with other local schools and is currently in the process of ensuring this support is properly planned and that objectives are agreed.

The local authority and other external consultants have undertaken reviews of the school over recent months. These reviews have provided useful recommendations and next steps for the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector