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23 November 2012

Mr David Ramsden
Headteacher
Little Heath School
Little Heath Road
Reading
RG31 5TY

Dear Mr Ramsden

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Little Heath School

Following my visit to your school on 23 November 2012, 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 September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, teachers, the chair and vice-chairs of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated and the inspector looked at summary statements of progress and other documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work.

Context

Since the last inspection, the school have reviewed and adapted the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders, staff and teaching assistants. Significant changes have occurred within the governing body including new appointments to the posts of Chair and two vice-chairs who are taking lead roles in governor committees for standards and premises development. A small number of teachers have left or are due to leave at the end of the term. The curriculum has been revised to expand students' opportunities to use their literacy, communication and numeracy skills into other subjects.

Main findings

The headteacher and other senior leaders have taken decisive action since the inspection. They have set an ambitious pace of change and a real sense of urgency and excitement is apparent from leaders and other staff. Actions have been identified, agreed and staff are implementing these at speed across the school. Leaders and staff recognised that work started before the inspection was not being introduced with enough urgency or being used consistently; a different position from that seen currently. Senior leaders have been pro-active in identifying and sharing effective practice across the school and monitoring activities are tightly focused on improving students' standards and progress. Everyone spoken to during the visit showed a real commitment and determination to raise student achievement quickly.

Training has been increased, especially in how to increase students' opportunities to use their literacy and communication skills in other subjects. New resources have been bought for classes and the school library and students are expected to read more frequently in tutor times. This approach is now being replicated to increase numeracy opportunities. New methods are being trialled in a number of subjects including a whole school focus on reinforcing percentage work through tutor time.

A full review of governance has taken place since the inspection including new appointments. The roles of the new chair and joint vice-chairs have been expanded. Greater emphasis is being given to holding leaders to account for the schools work and students achievement. Local authority officers are providing training and are working with new governors to introduce new ways of working.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- include more quantifiable targets and milestones throughout the action plan
- identify more clearly who is going to monitor and evaluate each action and how resources will be funded
- confirm HMI involvement in department profiling and reviews in the spring.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The headteacher has been pro-active in identifying where support would be beneficial. There has been a swift and effective response from local authority officers, including the deployment of an advanced skills teacher and to support governors. External consultants have been used wisely to support specific aspects of the schools action plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Judith Rundle
Her Majesty's Inspector