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Mr Paul Woods
Headteacher
Bishop Stopford's School
Brick Lane
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Dear Mr Woods

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Bishop Stopford's School

Following my visit to your school on 22 April 2013, 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, several middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, a representative from the local authority, the two National Leaders of Education who are supporting the school, and two representative groups of students from the sixth form and the school council. A range of documents were evaluated including the school action plan and impact plan, minutes of recent governing body meetings and records relating to the monitoring of teaching and students' progress, particularly in mathematics.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, four members of staff have left the school. The school has a number of teachers on temporary contracts and is seeking to appoint permanent replacements before the end of the current term.

Main findings

Senior leaders' positive responses to the priorities identified by the inspection are increasing staff understanding about school improvement. Measurable success criteria have been set to demonstrate the impact of actions taken. Together, you and your senior leaders have ensured that there is a clear agenda for improving the quality of teaching and accelerating students' progress.

Much is being done to improve the quality of teaching and demand more from all staff. This includes a sharper focus on monitoring teaching and providing intensive coaching and mentoring to develop good practice. You report that this strategy has already led to some improvements in teaching.

Nevertheless, senior leaders have not hesitated in tackling under-performance and moving staff on where necessary. They have ensured that line management, tracking systems and opportunities to identify and meet students' needs are fully in place. These changes are leading to students making better progress, notably in mathematics. Following the inspection, the recent early entry for the GCSE examination in mathematics shows a significant improvement when compared to previous results. Students have noticed the recent changes and indicated that mathematics lessons are more challenging and that teaching is better across all subjects. Actions to improve classroom management and punctuality to school and lessons are having a positive impact on students' attitudes to learning; they say that lessons are calmer. Since the inspection, attendance has improved compared with the same period last year.

The governing body is drawing on the educational expertise of individual members, who are using their governor training well to provide more challenge. The impact of this can be seen in the increasing demands on leaders at all levels to improve teaching and learning, and in keeping subjects under review. However, governors recognise that there is still more to do to increase the effectiveness of all leaders and help senior leaders sustain the recent changes and improvements over time.

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

- establish the revised new system for tracking students' progress
- ensure that the planned work to review and develop the role of senior and middle leaders is completed within the time set out in the action plan.

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

External support

The local authority is providing good support. Its arrangement for the school to work consultatively with the National Leaders of Education is constructive. You have taken the lead in setting a well-considered agenda for improvement in consultation with the National Leaders of Education. Planning for improvement is well informed by research findings. The National Leaders of Education have begun to carry out a number of commissioned reviews and are currently focusing on developing the skills of senior leaders and middle managers. Regular advice and support from external consultants, including leading teachers from the National Leaders' schools, is enabling teachers to improve the quality of their teaching and students' learning. Further work is planned.

To accelerate improvement, the following further intervention is recommended:

- developing middle leaders to carry out lesson observations and provide feedback and support, particularly for teachers receiving coaching and mentoring
- ensuring that meetings with middle leaders are sharply focused on driving improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Enfield, the London Diocesan Board for Schools, and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector