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Mr Charlie Currie
Headteacher
Brighton Hill Community School
Brighton Way
Basingstoke
RG22 4HS

Dear Mr Currie

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brighton Hill Community School

Following my visit to your school on 15 July 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 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and your senior leaders, five middle leaders, three members of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's action plan and reviewed other documents, including information about your students' progress and the quality of teaching. I also accompanied you on a walk around the school, visiting eight lessons briefly.

Context

A number of staff changes are planned for September, including at senior and middle leaders levels. The Interim Executive Board is moving to full governing body status from the start of the new academic year. The school is also moving to a four House tutoring system.

Main findings

You and the Interim Executive Board have set about tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection with determination and energy. Senior leaders are fully involved in this process and understand their clearly defined responsibilities. Plans to strengthen the senior leadership team further, through thoughtful restructuring, are well under way. The school's action plan incorporates clearly the key areas for improvement. Improvement activities are practical and well-focused. Helpfully, the plan identifies challenging targets, broad impact criteria and a suitable range of monitoring activities. However, you need to include clearer outcome measures for different groups of pupils and subject areas so that it is easier to evaluate more fully the impact of your actions.

The Interim Executive Board has a clear focus on the progress made by different groups of students. They support and challenge leaders robustly. They understand that new members of the governing body will need well-devised induction to ensure that they are able to take up their roles quickly and effectively.

The quality of teaching is improving across most subjects. In the lessons visited briefly, students were purposefully involved in activities which were fun and suitably challenging. In English and mathematics, whole class discussion and small group work helped students to build their confidence and team working skills. In drama, dance and physical education, students were actively engaged because the tasks were stimulating and interesting.

You and your senior team observe teachers frequently and have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Improved feedback to teachers and well-planned training and development opportunities mean that teachers have a clearer understanding about what makes a successful lesson and what is not good enough. In science, for example, teachers have worked together to review the curriculum and strengthen planning so that lessons focus more precisely on what the students need to know in order to be successful in the next stage of their learning. Teachers have also led training in their areas of specialism in order to strengthen subject knowledge across the department. As a result, lessons are becoming more practical and challenging.

The school works hard to improve students' speaking, reading and writing. In lessons students are encouraged to use subject specific vocabulary and to talk 'like a scientist' or 'a sports person' when evaluating their work in different subjects. In English, teachers are ensuring that students are given sufficient time to practise their extended writing. The school also provides additional support for students who find it difficult to read, including extensive literacy support for students in Year 7.

Your middle leaders are enthusiastic about their role in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. Successful line management arrangements mean that they are clear about their roles and are held to account. They understand the school's strengths but are unafraid to pinpoint where things are not yet good

enough. Participation in the school's Consultative Groups enables them to gain experience of whole school improvement. From September, middle leaders will be fully involved in monitoring the work of their teams. Freeing middle leaders from tutor group duties will create designated time for them to carry out their duties more rigorously. They are looking forward to their enhanced responsibility but will need training and on-going support to ensure that they carry out monitoring activities to a consistently high standard.

Senior leaders and the Interim Executive Board are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure all improvement plans contain clear and measurable outcome targets that relate to different groups of pupils
- ensure that new members of the governing body are provided with well-planned induction so that they can take up their roles quickly and effectively
- train and support middle leaders so that they are able to monitor the quality of work in their teams to an equally high standard.

I will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. I recommend that a further monitoring inspection is carried out during the next academic year to review the school's progress in raising achievement, improving the quality and consistency of teaching and increasing the skills of leaders at all levels.

External support

The District Manager knows the school well. Local authority support has been well-targeted. Advisers and consultants have helped leaders to gain an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have also helped to improve the quality of planning and assessment in English and mathematics. The school and the local authority will review the level of support for the new academic year so that it is proportionate and responds to the school's changing needs and priorities. The school also works well with partner schools.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector