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9 June 2014

Keith Bennett
Headteacher
Marland School
Peters Marland
Torrington
EX38 8QQ

Dear Mr Bennett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Marland School

Following my visit to your school on 9 June 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 February 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:

- improve the ability of the governing body and senior leaders to monitor the school's progress, by including in the school action plan details of the resources needed to support actions and clearer milestones for achieving them
- evaluate the impact of therapy and personal development initiatives on improving students' behaviour and social development
- record in greater detail the actions taken following an incident requiring physical intervention
- work with the local authority to complete the review of arrangements for new admissions so that the needs of students are matched closely with the school's provision.

Evidence

During the visit, I held discussions with you, other senior leaders, two student support staff, a small group of students, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I visited several classes and the residential provision and reviewed documents relating to behaviour, physical intervention and exclusion. I also evaluated the school's action plan.

Context

Since the last inspection the school roll has increased from 64 to 70 students.

Main findings

Since the section 5 inspection in February, you, your leadership team, staff and governors have taken a range of positive actions to improve the school.

Steps have been taken to strengthen students' achievement which was judged to be good at the last inspection. Students have their learning targets set out in a way which they understand more easily and their work is marked more systematically. Arrangements for recognising students' effort and achievement have been improved. Students like gaining rewards and special trips out for good work and behaviour. A particularly interesting and popular development has been the introduction of 'student jobs' in the school, which mirror the workplace. Students complete an application for the posts, are interviewed, and if successful receive a small hourly rate. These posts include helping in the kitchen, the art room and the school garden.

The school has revised its behaviour policy and improved its practice in managing incidents of challenging behaviour. Incidents are recorded more thoroughly and information analysed more effectively to identify possible causes. You recognise that it would be helpful to record in more detail the action that follows an incident. The number of incidents requiring physical intervention has fallen, although the number of exclusions remains broadly the same. The school provides a range of therapies to help students improve their behaviour and their emotional and social development. This work is not evaluated to show its impact.

You and your senior leaders are determined to tackle quickly the areas identified for improvement in the section 5 report. The action plan outlines suitable actions that will be taken to tackle each area for improvement identified in the inspection report. You have not yet put in milestones which let senior leaders and governors know how well the school is on track to meet targets term by term. Also, the financial resources needed to support the plan are not identified clearly.

The governing body has established an action plan monitoring committee which meets approximately monthly to check the school's progress. It now monitors more

closely records of incidents requiring physical intervention. Together with the governing body, you have begun to review the school's admissions policy in order to clarify the range of students' needs for which the school can provide most effectively. A refurbishment programme is planned to improve the residential accommodation during the summer holidays.

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

The school is making good use of external support. The local authority has provided additional funding for the school to engage external support. An external consultant and an educational psychologist have provided valued support to staff, helping them to review the school's policies on behaviour management and to develop new strategies for managing students' behaviour. This has had a positive impact and led to a fall in the number of incidents requiring physical intervention.

Later this month, you and the Chair of the Governing Body are due to attend a 'Getting to Good' seminar organised by Ofsted.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector