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Mr C 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 30 June 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 April 2015. 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:

- Make sure the action plan is a sharp tool for driving improvement. Define the starting point for each planned activity and its intended impact on practice at key points in the future. Use this information to evaluate the plan regularly and adjust it as needed.
- Ensure any teacher required to teach outside of their subject area receives the training and support needed to do the job well.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, your senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I scrutinised documents, including the school's action plans and information about students' progress. I also briefly visited lessons and held discussions with middle leaders and teachers.

Context

Over a third of your teaching staff will be new to the school in September. New heads of science and design and technology will be joining. A further nine teachers will also have taken up post by that time. Only one vacancy for a science teacher will remain.

Main findings

You and your senior team have made the most of time since the inspection. You have successfully recruited teachers and are ensuring that your significantly changed staff group receive suitable training from the start. New staff have already attended induction sessions. Leaders are planning a suitably custom-made training programme ready for the autumn term. Teachers will attend sessions related to their specific development needs. Teachers with particular strengths will share their practice. You rightly recognise that the exact training needs of your new teachers will become clearer over time. You are in a good position to adapt training as needed. Your system for regularly capturing and reviewing teachers' strengths and areas for development is robust. Existing staff value the training received this term. For example, teachers talked positively about how they learnt more about using questions to challenge and deepen students' thinking by listening to recordings of their peers doing this well. However, they also spoke about the extra anxiety faced when they had to teach subjects in which they had no expertise. The training and support received to manage this was reported as being variable. It is important that you address this.

Leaders have made sure a new approach to assessing students' progress is ready for September. Subject leaders have been attending education conferences and working with local authority advisers to decide the best approach. They have defined the progress students should make, step by step, in different aspects of each subject. Helpful, easy to follow, tracking sheets are in place for teachers and students to use to set targets and assess progress. Subject leaders are working with their teams on suitably detailed plans for teaching. These define clearly the expected levels of challenge for students of different abilities studying the same topic. This is a good platform for further work to ensure lessons are not too easy or too hard for different students in the class. Senior leaders are tightening their approach to ensuring that teachers assess students' progress accurately. Subject leaders will now meet with their line manager after each student progress checkpoint. At these meetings, subject leaders will be required to justify their assessment methods. With their

manager they will scrutinise samples of students' work to check the marks given for work consistently match the standard reached. The first round of these meetings takes place next Monday.

The actions you are taking are well-considered. However, your action plan does not define the starting points for actions or the intended impact. Stated goals are, in the main, too vague. It is not always clear exactly what will be different or by when. You are not in a strong position to decide if actions taken are swift or successful enough or when you need a new approach.

Governors continue to hold you tightly to account. They recognise the action plan needs sharpening. They plan to raise this at the next meeting of the governing body. The Chair of Governors is clear that the biggest barrier to making sure teaching and achievement are consistently good is staff turnover. Rightly, she is determined to satisfy herself that everything possible has been done to hold on to effective teachers. Her plan for governors to interview staff who are leaving this summer, to review their experiences of working at Brighton Hill, is sensible.

External support

You have acted quickly to secure helpful support. The headteacher of an outstanding school is carrying out an external review of pupil premium spending. You have made sure that subject leaders receive suitable support from local authority subject advisers. The science adviser's work with senior staff, to make sure plans for teaching science are sound, is a good example of this.

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

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Her Majesty's Inspector