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18 May 2011

Mrs S Godden
Headteacher
Oldbury Wells School
Oldbury Wells
Bridgnorth
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Dear Mrs Godden

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Oldbury Wells School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with my colleague Charlotte Evers on 17 May 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and pre-inspection meeting, and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to Ms Thomas for her involvement throughout the process as well as to the middle leaders, students and local authority officers we spent time with.

Since the previous inspection, a new Director of Learning for English has joined the school as has one teacher of mathematics. The Director of Learning for mathematics, recently appointed at the previous inspection, is now firmly established in his role. Between September and April, a member of the senior leadership team has been in post as acting headteacher while the substantive headteacher was supporting a local school.

As a result of the inspection on 25 November 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has improved in all key indicators since the previous inspection and particularly in English and mathematics. The proportion of students achieving GCSE grade C or above in each of English and mathematics rose significantly in 2010. When combined with five or more other subjects, this headline figure is no longer significantly below and now broadly matches the national average. The school's detailed and accurate tracking systems

September 2010



indicate that this increase in attainment is set to continue in 2011 and beyond, with the combined results exceeding national expectations. The number of students attaining the highest grades in English and mathematics has also increased since the previous inspection, and both now reflect the national averages.

The quality of teaching has improved as a result of the decisive action taken by school leaders and the effective support, including from the local authority, to support teacher training. The impact of this has been an increase in the quality of learning. In every lesson observed, students had opportunities to engage quickly and actively in their own learning. Students had positive attitudes to learning which led to good behaviour. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson students enthusiastically responded to a team challenge and successfully developed their understanding of percentages. Good examples of how the most able students were challenged through probing questioning and careful task selection were observed in history, English and science lessons. In other lessons, students whose skills, knowledge and understanding were less developed had good quality support to ensure they made at least expected progress in learning and in working independently. When learning was less rapid, the good strategies planned for were not fully exploited by teachers. During lessons, students received useful feedback to help them improve. The quality of feedback in written work was variable. In some students' work, helpful targets were noted for the next stage, however this was not consistently applied across all subjects.

The role of middle leaders has been strengthened since the previous inspection. An increased focus on taking ownership for the quality of teaching and standards in their subject areas has led to good progress in improving these aspects of school life. Their involvement in the scheduled subject 'health checks' has developed the accuracy of their self-evaluation and enabled them to identify where improvement is needed. This has led to increased consistency in the quality of provision and improved student achievement. Regular and tightly structured meetings have resulted in the Directors of Learning for English and mathematics, ably supported by the school's data manager, being able to track the progress of students across the key stages and put in place effective intervention strategies, particularly in Key Stage 4. Within and across departments there have been increased opportunities for teachers to share and learn from each other's good practice. For example, peer observations have supported teachers to develop their practice in using strategies to enable students to be more involved in their own learning. Leaders have also increased to good effect the opportunities within the curriculum and through enrichment activities to increase students' awareness of different ethnic groups. The pace of progress was at least maintained, and in aspects increased, under the leadership of the acting headteacher.

The school's specialism has led the way in developing a more personalised approach to curriculum development as well as introducing good strategies to enable more girls to achieve the highest grades in science. The specialism leader has been proactive in supporting improved teaching and learning across the school.



I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009

- Raise standards in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring teaching enables students to engage actively in their learning
 - building upon the good practice within these subject areas by sharing effective and engaging teaching ideas and activities so that all staff deliver interesting and challenging lessons.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that learning is more consistently good or better by ensuring:
 - work is well matched to the needs of students, particularly the more able
 - students get down to work quickly and have more opportunities to work independently or in groups
 - assessments, both through marking and teacher feedback, consistently identify and inform students how to improve

- Improve the impact of middle managers so they:
 - monitor and improve the quality of provision within their subject areas
 - share ideas and support colleagues through appropriate training.

- Increase students' awareness of different ethnic groups within multicultural Britain.