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27 November 2012

Christopher Edwards
Westbourne Sports College
Marlow Road
Ipswich
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Dear Mr Edwards

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Westbourne Sports College

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 2012, 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 September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior managers, the head of English, a representative of the local authority, and the chair of governors. Documents scrutinised included improvement plans, minutes of governors meetings, and lesson observation records. Short visits were made to 15 classes and a sample of workbooks observed.

Context

The school is currently in consultation to become an academy.

Main findings

Since the last inspection the school has modified its improvement plans in the light of inspection findings. Challenging targets and appropriate timescales been set. Progress toward them is monitored effectively by senior staff. Particularly precise and challenging targets have been set for English, and associated action plans and their implementation has led to improvements in achievement in this subject throughout the school. The school has rightly put more effort into aspects of literacy in Key Stage 3.

The school is moving quickly to introduce new systems to improve teaching and learning. The lesson observation system now pays good attention to learning rather than teacher activities. Associated with this, much professional development has been undertaken both within subject areas and at whole-school level, for example on assessment. The use of assessment in class is developing well, though not all teachers use it consistently.

Much work is currently being undertaken to ensure that all students are stimulated to learn effectively, especially those in the middle-attaining group. In some classes, notably in areas of mathematics and English, this is done well so that all students learn well. This good practice has not yet been shared across the school however. In a minority of classes the level of teaching is pitched too low. As a consequence, some students become bored and learning and behaviour deteriorates. These same students demonstrate good learning skills in classes where they are challenged to learn and are interested.

Teachers have undertaken professional development on marking. Most is thorough and helpful, identifying the next steps that students need to take to improve. Some examples of cursory marking practice remain however despite the monitoring undertaken by managers.

School improvement plans are comprehensive. Governors have been instrumental in their development. However they are too dependent on information supplied by senior managers. This means that their understanding of progress towards improvement targets is weak because they do not monitor performance independently. The governing body is not currently at full strength and has a number of vacancies.

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, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- Ensure that assessment is used effectively to plan classes so that all students are stimulated to learn effectively, sharing the good practice that exists.

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- Ensure that the governing body is brought up to strength and that governors monitor performance towards targets more effectively

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

External support

The Local Authority has given much effective support to develop the monitoring of teaching and learning, as well as more specialist development in English and science. This support is now reducing however

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector