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19 December 2012

Mr Mark Sutton
Principal
Charnwood College (Upper)
Thorpe Hill
Loughborough
LE11 4SQ

Dear Mr Sutton

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Charnwood College (Upper)

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the Principal and Assistant Principal, members of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated, and short visits were made to lessons in English and mathematics.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the college since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

The college development plan has been revised appropriately. The leadership team has also undertaken a thorough review of the mathematics department. An important and very useful purpose of this review was to deepen senior leaders'

understanding of the key issues raised by the inspection, in order to bring about more rapid improvement. Consequently, the college now has clearer targets for improved teaching and achievement in mathematics. Throughout the college, the biennial programme of departmental reviews has been augmented by a sharper system of on-going monitoring by line managers. Governors have added a further target to the Principal's performance management plan, relating to the proportion of teaching judged good or better across the college.

In January, the college is planning to introduce a revised form for observing teaching. Senior leaders are clear about the generic features of good teaching that are expected, but less consideration has been given to promoting higher subject-specific standards.

While effective action has been taken in key areas, there are still some potential barriers to the college's further improvement. These include the reorganisation of the college and other local schools, and the on-going budget deficit. Attendance is no better than average and aspects of behaviour would benefit from closer analysis and evaluation, including exclusion and seclusion rates.

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:

- Strengthen the college's lesson observation programme by engaging middle leaders in defining what makes good teaching, and consequently brings about high standards, in their subject; and as a consequence of this, improve senior leaders' understanding about effective subject-specific teaching and learning.
- Analyse and evaluate, with more rigour, patterns of behaviour and attendance across different groups of students - including those from different backgrounds and with different learning needs - and consider this data alongside students' academic achievement.

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

External support

The local authority has provided appropriate support and challenge to the Principal and senior leadership through challenge meetings with the school improvement adviser, and has helped to broker support for the mathematics department through a former local authority subject specialist.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector