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18th December 2012

Mr T Farr
Lathom High School : A Technology College
Glenburn Road
Skelmersdale
Lancashire
WN8 6JN

Dear Mr Farr

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Lathom High School

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated as was the report following an audit of the work of the governing body by the local authority. Documents summarising other actions taken since the section 5 inspection were also scrutinised.

Context

There have been no changes to the school's context since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

The headteacher and other senior leaders have produced a post inspection improvement plan that tackles the key recommendations arising from the October

inspection. However, the means by which progress will be checked and evaluated in the short and medium term is not always clear.

Appropriate strategies are now in place to tackle underperformance among boys and students at middle ability levels. Leaders are taking appropriate actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A new teaching and learning policy has been devised; this places a far greater emphasis on the evaluation of teaching and learning and the ways and means of enabling and sustaining improvement. A review of the governing body has been undertaken by the local authority and areas for further support and development identified. The governing body will be reconstituted in early 2013 with a more sharply focused committee system. A new strategy committee will be formed and will comprise the Chair of the Governing Body and the three chairs of the key committees with the purpose to better focus on and monitor school improvement planning and practice. Link governors have been attached to each curriculum area to develop a better understanding of the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on student performance.

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 recommends that further action is taken to:

- continue to strengthen the capacity of governors to check the progress made by the school in meeting objectives in the school improvement plan and in holding leaders to account for the school's performance
- ensure that the improvement plan identifies how progress will be measured towards meeting success criteria that are focused sharply on improving pupils' outcomes, improved teaching and learning and are evaluated in the short and medium term for effectiveness
- ensure that middle leaders and teachers are adept in the use of data to set and monitor student progress targets and to intervene effectively when these are not met
- strengthen the school's engagement with key local partners so as to further embed and allow the growing aspirational and improvement culture of the school to be developed more rapidly.

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

External support

As noted above the local authority has conducted a review of the governing body. The local authority is committed to supporting the school further in aiding its improvement planning and practice. Links have been established with other schools and educational institutions to explore best practice within the sector. The school recognises the need to develop further partnerships within the local and extended region with educational institutions and employers so as to better embed its developing aspirational and improvement ethos.

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

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- The lead inspector.