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15 January 2013

Mr Edward Fitzpatrick
Headteacher
Stanley High School
Fleetwood Road
Southport
Merseyside
PR9 9TF

Dear Mr Fitzpatrick

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

Following my visit with Barbara Comiskey Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 14 January 2013, 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 us 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 November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a number of governors, and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staffing or the school's organisation since the inspection.

Main findings

Founded on a realistic evaluation of the school's performance, the headteacher continues to lead a well judged approach to the school's improvement. This is not reflected well in the school's action plan which lacks a sharp focus in some areas, such as the performance of groups of students including boys and those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding. This belies the school's attention to improving the performance of these groups which is being assisted by substantial recent improvements to the management of data about students' achievement. Information is both more readily available to staff and presented in more accessible formats.

Senior leaders and governors have analysed the barriers to students' success accurately. Consequently, alongside the sustained approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning, they are developing a broader curriculum which matches students' needs and aspirations more closely. From September 2013, Key Stage 4 students will be able to choose from three pathways, ranging from entirely academic to largely vocational courses. In areas such as technology, modern languages and physical education the range of courses is being increased to extend opportunities for students as well as cater for those who prefer more practical approaches to learning.

The headteacher and governing body have a shared vision for the school and planning to deliver this is underway. For example, long-term plans are in place to restructure the school's leadership team better to meet the demands of a school striving to improve continuously. The governing body has high expectations, evident in the increased level of challenge in the headteacher's performance targets. Governors are further extending their understanding of the school's operation and performance both through well targeted training, for instance on performance data, as well as through opportunities to shadow senior staff.

Senior leaders and governors are taking 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:

- raise the target to at least 80% for the proportion of lessons which are consistently good or better
- ensure that targets set for the attainment and progress of particular groups of students are readily accessible to staff and the governing body.

External support

Support from the local authority continues to be targeted appropriately, for instance on supporting the heads of core subjects in analysing students' performance and on providing training for the governing body. The school works in partnership with a local university to develop better teaching, including through training and action research. Through this partnership, a substantial number of staff are taking up the opportunity to gain a post-graduate qualification. Links with a number of local schools are contributing positively to improvement, for instance through support to introduce mobile technologies to enhance learning for lower ability and more vulnerable students.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin

Her Majesty's Inspector