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8 March 2013

Jonathan Goodchild  
Headteacher  
Smithdon High School  
Downs Road  
Hunstanton  
PE36 5HY

Dear Mr Goodchild

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

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

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a representative of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The revised school improvement plan was evaluated. In addition, the headteacher accompanied HMI on a tour of the school.

#### **Context**

Since the last inspection, two teachers have left the school. They have been replaced by one full-time and two part-time teachers. The school is actively investigating conversion to academy status.

#### **Main findings**

Leaders have worked with the local authority to revise the school improvement plan. Activities are clearly focused on addressing the areas for improvement identified in

the recent inspection. Clear baseline statements for each priority enable staff and governors to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions in relation to their starting points. Milestones have been set to check progress in the short, medium and long-term. Additional annotation shows that the improvement plan is evaluated regularly.

Professional development groups that involve staff with a mixture of subject and teaching expertise are beginning to identify and share good practice in teaching. For example, one group is focused on how to improve pupils' literacy through different subjects, an inconsistent feature of teaching at the last inspection. There are structured opportunities planned to disseminate and develop this work by involving all staff. Examples of teachers' planning indicate that a concerted focus on making clear to students what they are expected to learn, is having a positive impact.

Work to improve the effectiveness of middle leaders includes regular reviews with senior staff, who consider recent meetings more rigorous and better supported by analysis of performance data. Judicious use of available resources is helping to address inconsistencies in middle leadership. For example, the school's evaluation indicates that shared subject leadership and support by the advanced skills teacher is helping to raise standards in science. The department has gathered positive feedback about improvements from students.

Senior leaders have given swift attention to improving the curriculum. Students' experience of different teachers for the same subject has reduced. A new sixth form offer is being developed based on quality and viability of courses in school, supported by advice and guidance for students about alternatives elsewhere. A governor has now been linked to the sixth form. Governors are supporting the school's improvement work by participating in staff training, focus groups and learning walks and now have more data in order to challenge underachievement.

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:

- add further detail to the targets for pupils' progress in the improvement plan
- ensure that middle leaders' plans show how school priorities will be addressed
- evaluate students' attendance, participation rates and response to homework when evaluating the quality of teaching and its impact on learning
- align governors to all improvement priorities.

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

### **External support**

The local authority has supported the school by helping to revise the improvement plan, by organising a network of headteachers focused on 'getting to good' and by providing specialists in some subjects who are available for consultancy.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**