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Mr James Harris
Headteacher
Glenburn Sports College
Yewdale
Southway
Skelmersdale
Lancashire
WN8 6JB

Dear Mr Harris

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

Following my visit to your school on 18 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on my findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you and your senior leadership team made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school.

My visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2013.

Evidence

During my visit, I met with you, senior leaders, students, governors and a local authority adviser. I looked at a range of improvement documentation and the school's self-evaluation. You also gave me a tour of the school with brief visits to classrooms in most subject areas.

Context

The school has had six headteachers in the past nine years. You have been in post for two years during which time the number of students on roll has continued to fall. This has led to staff reductions and some instability, particularly in the English and mathematics departments. The school is not currently running a deficit budget.

Main findings

Staff, students, governors and the local authority adviser are all very positive about the direction the school has taken in recent months. You and your senior team have set ambitious targets, some of which have already been met. The early entry mathematics GCSE results are the best the school has ever achieved and have set the bar high for the summer entry examinations; staff and student attendance has improved, behaviour is good, and tracking data show that levels of progress are improving.

Your self-evaluation documentation is detailed and sets high expectations for the school. You know what the school does well and have rightly identified what the school needs to do to improve. Action plans clearly address the areas for improvement from the last inspection, in particular the need to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by improving the way teaching and learning are monitored, evaluated and supported.

A well-targeted professional development programme is already in place that focuses on sharing best practice, developing effective feedback, and improving planning to ensure it addresses differentiation and progress. Training sessions are supported by regular teaching and learning bulletins where teachers can share ideas, resources and good practice. Ten teachers have signed up to the Outstanding Teacher Intervention Programme which aims to help them improve their practice.

Students say that most lessons are now more interesting and engaging than in the past and that behaviour in lessons and around the school is much improved. They do however agree with your own self-evaluation that there are still pockets of weaker teaching, or as they described it, 'still a few boring lessons'. The students like the new reward system which they say they were consulted on; younger ones enjoy the thematic approaches in the Key Stage 3 curriculum; and they all say that teachers now listen to them and trust them. When I asked if they had a message for the headteacher one boy said, 'tell him he is doing a good job because he has turned the school right round since he came'. All of the other students agreed with him. The school could do well to build on the good practice in listening to the student voice by extending this to parents, encouraging them to express their opinions about the changes the school are making using Ofsted's Parent View web-site.

The governors are well-informed and supportive. They bring a good range of external expertise and provide appropriate levels of challenge. Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement at the recent section 5 inspection.

Following my visit to your school, I recommend the following:

- You and your Chair of Governors or another senior leader attend one of Ofsted's 'Getting to Good' seminars.
- The heads of English and mathematics attend one of Ofsted's 'Better English and maths' conferences. You can book this at www.calderconferences.co.uk/ofsted.
- The head of science explores opportunities for professional development in subject teaching and learning with the North West Science Learning Centre.
- Encourage parents to engage in the school improvement agenda by using Parent View to express their views about the changes taking place in school.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum leader takes a look at the Ofsted good practice report entitled 'Good practice on Key Stage 3 citizenship' Bury Church of England High School for examples of innovative practice in thematic learning.

What I can do to help:

- Investigate the dates and venues of Ofsted's improvement seminars and forward the details to you.
- Broker training for the science department with the North West Science learning Centre.
- Identify schools where White boys who are eligible for the pupil premium make good progress, particularly in literacy so that the links can be made and good practice shared.
- Identify and forward Ofsted reports on school improvement that may be of interest to the governors.

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

External support

The local authority is providing effective support. It is funding mathematics and English consultants and supporting the extended contract of a full-time mathematics teacher and adviser. This has already had a positive impact on results in mathematics. The local authority also supported the well-attended Easter school for Year 11 students.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

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