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29 April 2013

Mr Mark Southworth  
Headteacher  
Woodcote High School  
Meadow Rise  
Coulsdon  
CR5 2EH

Dear Mr Southworth

**Monitoring inspection of Woodcote High School, Croydon carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.**

Following my visit to your academy on 29 April 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2013.

**Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative of an external consultancy company, Partners in Excellence. We evaluated the academy action plan and looked at data on students' achievement. We walked around the academy together to meet staff and students.

**Context**

Since the previous inspection two teachers have been appointed to cover maternity leave and another teacher has been appointed to cover a temporary secondment. An external review of governance has taken place.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher and senior leaders have responded promptly to the recommendations of the inspection report. The action plan identifies suitable priorities and refers explicitly to the key areas for improvement. Leaders have identified the impact that they want their actions to have in the long term but the plan lacks short-term targets. This makes it difficult to review progress at key points along the journey and to add or amend priorities.

The leaders of the sixth form have responded with a great sense of urgency to tackle underachievement. They have made most progress in improving ways to assess and track students' progress. More rigorous monitoring is providing accurate information to share with students, staff and parents. External training and support for staff in using data is well planned. This is helping staff to compare performance with other schools and to set realistic targets. The introduction of enrolment passports to check students' aptitude for sixth form study six weeks after starting their courses and a tighter control of study time outside lessons are helping to raise students' expectations and check that they are on the right courses. Actions to review the curriculum and to improve the quality of teaching need to be given greater priority.

Senior leaders are setting more challenging targets for students in English and mathematics to enable subject leaders and teachers to see whether students are on track to make more than expected progress. Decisions about whether to enter students in Year 10 and 11 early for examinations in English and mathematics have been reviewed. Data for current students shows that this is being used more effectively to enable students to achieve the highest grades, particularly the more-able.

Additional training and support to improve teaching provide greater opportunities for teachers to observe each other and share good practice. More frequent and regular checks to assess how well students are learning in each subject need to link evidence about students' progress more precisely to the quality of teaching. Senior leaders plan to make subject leaders more accountable for the quality of teaching and learning in their departments.

Governors have a strong commitment to the academy and have reacted positively to the outcomes of the external review of governance. They have prepared a detailed and appropriate action plan with suitable timescales. They recognise that all governors need to be more rigorous in following up issues that are holding teaching back and in asking subject leaders to account directly for their areas of responsibility.

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 academy, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- refine the action plan so that it is easier to review progress at key points along the journey and to add or amend priorities if necessary
- sharpen checks on the quality of teaching and learning especially in the sixth form, by making subject leaders more accountable, and by considering a broader range of evidence to link the quality of teaching to students' progress over time.

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

### **External support**

An external consultancy company provides regular support through face-to-face visits with the leaders of each key stage, workshops with other partner schools and a wide range of computer software and resources. The academy is using this support well. External support does not provide any independent assessment of the academy. The external review of governance has allowed governors to reflect on their role and develop a better understanding of how to provide more challenge to the academy leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Wellham

### **Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter will be copied to the following:

- The Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA)