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Phillip Potter
Oak Grove College
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Dear Mr Potter,

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Oak Grove College, West Sussex Local Authority

Following my visit to your school on 10 May 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, one of the Co-Chairs of the Governing Body and members of your teaching staff. I evaluated the school improvement plan and the action plans which you, other staff and governors use to monitor the work of the school. I also accompanied an assistant headteacher on a complete tour of the school. This provided me with a good opportunity to look at student's work and speak to students and staff. It also enabled me to see the ways in which you have prioritised the development of literacy and the teaching of English and mathematics since the recent section 5 inspection.

Context

Since the previous inspection, two members of staff have left the school. In addition the head of English has resigned her leadership position. One new teacher has been appointed to teach in the sixth form. An advertisement has been placed to secure a new leader of English.

Main findings

Since the last inspection no time has been lost. With the support of your School Improvement Partner (SIP) you have acted promptly to revise your existing development plans in the light of its findings. You have effectively re-organised the work of some of your senior leaders, creating a new improvement team for English and providing support for the new leader of mathematics. Clearly-focused plans now underpin all activity. These specify well-targeted actions to bring about the necessary improvements. However, some minor adjustments need to be made to strengthen the ways in which the effectiveness of planned actions is measured and monitored.

Beyond this, you have made it clear to teachers of all subjects that the development of literacy must be a top priority. You have put together sound plans to re-organise the ways in which learning will be organised with effect from September. Planned changes will involve the introduction of a full literacy half hour for all students each day. In the meantime, however, you have introduced a temporary twenty minute slot, during the tutor period so that ground is not lost between now and September. During my tour of the school it was useful to see the impact of all of these strategies, which are clearly beginning to make a positive difference. This was evident in students' work and through the focus on key words and vocabulary on display in all subject areas.

In preparation for September, an audit of staff skills and expertise in the delivery of the literacy half hour has been conducted. Training has been provided for both teachers and additional adults. Staff members say that the training has been very beneficial and they now feel better equipped to support students more effectively in the development of their literacy skills.

In mathematics, the new leader has made use of existing software to create a 'progress ladder' for all students in Key Stages 3 and 4. The 'ladder' provides photographic and other relevant evidence of progress which is accessible to students and teachers alike. Each student's profile is regularly monitored and updated, thereby enabling additional support to be triggered if a student fails to progress. There are distinct signs that students are beginning to benefit from this approach.

With the support of the local authority, you have now upgraded your electronic management information systems. This means that assessment data relating to students' targets and progress in English and mathematics are now available for all staff to access electronically. Until very recently, this was not possible and not all teachers were able to access this information to plan their lessons.

Leaders at all levels within the school have been very focused and together, you are determined to bring about the necessary improvements. In particular a programme

of targeted coaching provided for identified staff to develop their skills in the teaching of literacy and English is proving beneficial. The teachers and additional adults concerned say they have valued the training and the students they teach are now making better progress.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last inspection. Following my visit to the school, I recommend further action is taken to:

- strengthen the improvement plan by ensuring that actions taken to bring about improvement can be effectively measured and monitored
- ensure that the data that are now available electronically on students' progress and targets in English and mathematics are put to maximum use by all teachers when planning their lessons.

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

External support

The local authority has worked closely with you to provide a range of effective support that is tailored closely to the school's specific needs and give you and your staff developmental feedback and training. There has been effective input from the advisory service on data management systems, target setting in mathematics and the development of literacy across subjects. Advisors from the local authority are also planning to assist you in evaluating the impact of your planned changes for September. Governors are keenly aware of the need to secure improvements and have made full use of the School Improvement Partner and local authority advisers reports to ensure that they have access to an objective external view of how well the school is doing.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Farmer
Her Majesty's Inspector