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13 June 2013

Mrs Cathy Tooze  
Executive Headteacher  
The Nobel School  
Mobbsbury Way  
Stevenage  
SG2 0HS

Dear Mrs Tooze

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Nobel School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the headteacher (designate), a group of students, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. I also visited a number of lessons briefly, accompanied by you, to gauge the quality of teaching.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has taken early retirement, and a substantive headteacher has been appointed for September 2013. A teacher of science has left the school. The new school building is now fully open.

## **Main findings**

Your improvement plan, which currently covers the period up until July 2013, correctly identifies key points for improvement and clearly indicates how the impact of the plan will be measured. Plans are in place for the headteacher (designate) to extend the plan into the next school year. The bi-weekly 'Action Group' meetings involving senior leaders, local authority and governors are a good way to ensure accountability and rigour.

Teachers are starting to use information on students' progress in a smarter way, and consequently the quality of teaching is improving. No teaching is consistently inadequate; however the proportion of teaching that requires improvement is still too large. The main weakness of teaching in the school is that not all teachers plan and deliver lessons that match the capabilities of all students in the class. Marking is mostly regular and helpful. However, teachers do not follow the revised system of telling students how well they have done and how they can improve consistently. Students told me there are more opportunities to learn independently, particularly in humanities subjects.

You and the executive deputy headteacher have worked well with the school's existing leaders and managers in establishing higher expectations and systems which aim to secure greater accountability. You are developing the leadership of subject and year heads. However, leadership at this level remains inconsistent, and you have identified a need to ensure that these leaders act on findings of their monitoring in order to have a greater impact on students' progress.

Members of the governing body have responded positively to the outcome of the last inspection. They are considering how effectively they are offering both challenge and support.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching.
- Ensure that recently introduced systems and procedures, including the marking policy, are applied consistently by all staff.
- Identify areas for development among middle leaders, and provide appropriate support and challenge to strengthen capacity at this level.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

## **External support**

The School Effectiveness Advisor, who spends one day a week in the school, has provided valuable support to the school's leaders, managers and governors through conducting learning walks and working with the governing body on what the school needs to do to improve. Good use has been made of the executive headteacher's school to provide suitable training and support for teachers who need to develop their practice, and for leaders whose role involves judging the quality of the teaching they observe.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**