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24 June 2013

Jim Nixon
Headteacher
City of Norwich School
Eaton Road
Norwich
NR4 6PP

Dear Mr Nixon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to City of Norwich School

Following my visit to your school on 21 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. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, three representatives of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated together with other documentation. A total of 11 classes were visited to evaluate learning

Main findings

Together with senior leaders and governors, you have made a determined start to address the issues identified at the last inspection. You have, rightly, concentrated on the improvement of teaching and support given to those students at risk of underachieving, especially in Key Stage 4. These actions are beginning to have a positive effect. For example at Key Stage 3, the proportion of students making expected progress is rising quickly in English and science. In science, the school can

demonstrate that those students eligible for pupil premium are making better progress than previously.

The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Actions plans are detailed and challenging, with appropriate timescales and targets. The school's emphasis on the improvement of teaching is supported by assessment of students' progress that is mostly accurate, though occasionally overgenerous, especially at the higher levels. These data are giving the school a good understanding of how different groups are progressing so that support can be targeted where needed.

In class, students are keen to learn. In those classes where they are given the opportunity to develop skills of independent learning and problem solving they quickly become confident and capable learners, able to learn at levels well above those expected for their age. However, although the assessment of progress is largely accurate it is not always used to plan lessons effectively. Consequently teaching does not always stimulate students of all abilities. Occasionally, lessons are pitched at a level far too low for their ability.

The school's lesson observation system is extensive and systematic. It monitors teaching well, and the school can point to examples of teachers whose lessons have improved markedly as a result of specialist support provided. The process goes some way to monitoring learning, but not always to the extent that it can accurately identify whether the level of what is being taught is at a level sufficiently high to challenge all students present. Marking in exemplary in some classes, notably in science, but inconsistent across the school. For example in some books students are unable to read teachers' comments. In many mathematics books all answers were marked as correct, indicating that students find the work too easy.

Governors are committed to and supportive of the school. They offer good challenge to issues around performance, but these are not always recorded in a way that allows subsequent checking of progress. For example timescales for actions are not always defined, nor are those accountable for their completion. They are sufficiently aware of the intricacies of school performance data, so that they are not too dependent on what they are told by the school.

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:

- ensure that the lesson observation system recognises the extent to which accurate assessment is used to structure the effective learning of all abilities in class.

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 local authority has provided effective support for action planning and the partnering of the school with outstanding providers.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector