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Mr N Charlton
Woodlands Academy
Broad Lane
Coventry
CV5 7FF

Dear Mr Charlton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodlands Academy

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with yourself and the deputy headteacher, with the chair and two members of the governing body and with a group of ten students. I also made short visits with yourself to four lessons. I observed Year 12 students taking part in a special day with a particular focus on application to university. I looked at the library and its use in developing students' reading. I reviewed a sample of books to evaluate the quality of marking. I evaluated the academy improvement plan.

Context

Since the inspection in May, senior leaders and the governing body have commenced the process of appointing two assistant headteachers and also a middle leader to oversee academic support for students. A new director for the sixth form has already taken up his post.

Main findings

Since the inspection in May 2013, senior leaders and governors have moved quickly to ensure further improvement to the school. Their actions have included:

- Agreeing a revised leadership structure with new appointments to strengthen capacity.
- Approving a new quality assurance policy with a calendar of the key monitoring activity over the year.
- Commissioning an external consultant to audit the effectiveness of the governing body.
- Revising the marking and assessment policy. Following this each department has created its own policy to match the whole school expectations in a way appropriate to that subject.
- Strengthening the curriculum available for the sixth form.
- Improving transition activities for the sixth form.
- Appointing a sixth form supervisor to secure better use of students' time when they are not in lessons.

During the learning walk I noted good relationships in class. I saw that teachers had clear learning objectives to their lessons. Students expressed their appreciation to me of the way their teachers worked hard to help them improve their work. They also appreciated the opportunities they received to develop wider skills in leadership and in activities including sports teams.

Marking is generally following the school's new policy and there is good dialogue developing between teachers and students on how they can improve their work. The use of different coloured pens has been recently introduced to distinguish teachers' and students' comments. In a few cases, although books are marked regularly, the new departmental policy is not evident.

Students' reading is developing well. Students in Year 7 are making good use of the library in a structured way and their reading ages are regularly monitored. This good practice is being carried through to Year 8.

The governing body maintains a good oversight of the school and its members have a good understanding of the academy and how it needs to develop. The governing body is receiving better information on students' progress and the quality of teaching. The quality and standards committee of the governing body is now meeting on a monthly basis. The governing body is fully involved with new policies such as the more rigorous approach to performance management and the spending and evaluation of pupil premium funding.

The academy improvement plan covers all the areas for improvement in the May Ofsted report. The plan is succinct and the actions are clear with suitable

accountability and timings. It should lead to the necessary improvement being achieved within a year. However the success criteria are not sufficiently precise, nor is there an evaluation strategy that will enable the governing body to know whether sufficient success has been achieved at key times over the next year.

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:

- Agree more precise criteria for the success of the academy improvement plan together with a succinct strategy for evaluating the success of the plan at key intervals over the coming year.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. No further visit is likely before March 2014.

External support

The academy has received good support from its school improvement partner. In addition it has commissioned external accredited inspectors to support senior and middle leaders in their evaluation of the quality of teaching. The academy also draws helpful support from local networks of schools in Coventry. An external consultant has been commissioned to lead the audit of the governing body. This level of external support is likely to be sufficient. The academy may also wish to access the professional development courses available from Ofsted.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Barbour
Her Majesty's Inspector