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10 September 2013

Mrs J Barron  
Headteacher  
Sturminster Newton High School  
Bath Road  
Sturminster Newton  
Dorset  
DT10 1DT

Dear Mrs Barron

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sturminster Newton High School**

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

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 any gaps in the attainment and progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils are closed rapidly
- ensure all teachers understand the impact that interventions funded by the pupil premium have on individual pupils so that they can modify their teaching to meet these pupils' learning needs
- evaluate the impact of professional development activities on the quality of teaching
- adjust the action plan to specify precise success criteria and set out when progress towards these criteria will be assessed.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, as well as our meeting, I met with senior and middle leaders, four representatives of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school post-inspection action plan, scrutinised supporting documentation and had a brief tour of the school.

## **Main findings**

School leaders and governors have responded positively and quickly to the section 5 inspection findings. In particular school leaders have taken several steps to improve the quality of teaching. School leaders now expect teachers to use pupil performance data and other assessments to plan lessons that demand more of all pupils. These expectations have been communicated to staff through training activities, staff meetings and revised lesson planning arrangements. In addition, teachers are members of 'Improving Learning Groups' which have been set up to help develop and exchange good practice in teaching from within the school.

School leaders have sharpened lesson observation procedures so that any fall from good teaching results in supportive action for the teacher in question. If further observations show that teaching has not improved, the school can move quickly to more formal competency procedures.

There is an expectation for senior and middle managers to take increased responsibility for pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in their subject areas as the plans for improving teaching are implemented.

GCSE results improved in 2012 and the gap between those eligible for free school meals and all other pupils has halved in terms of their average points score. While this is welcome, the school's own tracking data shows gaps in performance between pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils in other year groups. It is not yet clear how activities and additional support provided through the pupil premium for individuals and groups of pupils is linked with changes to teaching practice and improved learning in the classroom.

The school's action plan does not have specific criteria to be met by specific times. This hinders school leaders and governors ability to evaluate the impact of the planned actions. Nevertheless, the planned actions are appropriate to tackle the areas for improvement noted in the section 5 inspection report. In addition an evaluation timetable has been published which fully involves the Governing Body.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I will contact the school in January 2014 to discuss impact of the planned actions on improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement.

## **External support**

The local authority (LA) has provided effective support since the inspection through initial meetings with the school to discuss the development of the action plan. The local authority has also brokered links with local schools to help improve the quality of teaching, marking and feedback to pupils. The School Evaluation Partner will undertake additional lesson observations as part of his overall evaluating of the school's work. The LA representative is working with the Governing Body on the evaluation of the impact of the post-inspection action plan. External consultant support has already been used to support developments in English.

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

Yours sincerely

Tom Winskill

**Senior Her Majesty's Inspector**