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Mr Michael Lambert
Headteacher
The Wordsley School Business & Enterprise and Music College
Brierley Hill Road
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Dear Mr Lambert

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Wordsley School Business & Enterprise and Music College

Following my visit to your school on 26 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 May 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:

- make sure that teaching meets the needs of students of all abilities in the class including the least able
- set targets for all students to help them make better than nationally expected progress from their different starting points on entry to the school
- refine the school's action plan, and send a copy to me by 21 October, so that the achievement of all groups of students are clearly stated and that the leaders responsible for monitoring the actions planned are precisely identified
- strengthen the evaluation of the school's spending of the pupil premium funding (additional government money for students eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority) and publish the impact of this spending on the school's website.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a representative of the local authority and evaluated the school improvement plan. Together, we made short visits to some lessons and I considered documentation relating to students' achievement and the monitoring of teaching.

Context

There have been no important changes to the context of the school since the time of the last inspection.

Main findings

Some specific improvements were slow to start, in part because the school was awaiting the outcome of a complaint about the section 5 inspection. However, the momentum of improvement has increased and leaders' plans and, most importantly their actions, are making a positive difference. The short visits we made to lessons confirm the students' positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour.

School leaders have checked on the quality of students' learning through visits to lessons and looking at students' books and written work. Where necessary, individual teachers or groups of teachers have been supported to tackle areas that need to be improved and the school's records show that this is beginning to make a difference. More training for teachers is planned to focus on improving key aspects of their work. A new marking policy was introduced at the beginning of the year. Further evaluation of the impact of this work is due to take place. As headteacher, you and your fellow senior leaders have revised the process and timings of when you will review how well each subject area is making a difference to students' achievement. This means you can make sure that additional support can be given to students more quickly if needed.

School leaders have a comprehensive view of the 2013 GCSE results. Initial analysis indicates that, in English and mathematics, students' achievement requires improvement. This analysis also shows that some less able students made slower progress than their more able classmates. School leaders are investigating in more detail to what extent this is also the case for students currently in school. Given this issue, we agreed that school leaders should also look again at how well teachers plan activities to meet the needs of less able students. The gap between students supported by additional government funding and all students in the school narrowed slightly in 2013. Currently, the school sets 'aspirational' targets for the most able students. However, targets for all students to make better than expected progress from their different starting points are not consistently set. Once these have been set, teaching and other aspects of the school's work must ensure that students can achieve these targets and therefore make 'good' progress.

Appropriate changes to the curriculum have taken place. For example, almost all of the students currently in Year 10 are following GCSE science courses. A review of the number of subjects students can choose to study in Years 10 and 11 is also underway. During my visit, we discussed that it would be a sensible time to review the processes for identifying students with special educational needs. This is to make sure that these are all students with specific needs and not those who are underachieving.

A review of governance, organised with the support of the local authority, has recently begun. Governors have a clear understanding of what is required for the school to be judged 'good' and are aware of their role in holding school leaders to account for this. Those governors I met with understand that the pace of improvement needs to be quick and maintained. A more detailed evaluation of how well the school spends the pupil premium funding needs to be undertaken and this information then made available on the school's website.

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

School leaders have continued to draw upon the support of consultants and advisers from the local authority, including in supporting the development of students' literacy skills and in commissioning the review of governance. Senior and subject leaders also work in partnership with other schools to develop aspects of their work. Some impact is beginning to be seen as a result of the range of external support and partnership working.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector