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Alan Russell
Principal
Winstanley Community College
Kingsway North
Leicestershire
LE3 3BD

Dear Mr Russell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Winstanley Community College

Following my visit to your school on 16 October 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. 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:

- rapidly strengthen the quality and consistency of middle leadership to drive improvement in teaching and achievement, supported by regular links with senior leaders
- strengthen the improvement plan by:
 - including measurable success criteria and milestones to track progress over time
 - including detail about when and how progress will be monitored, evaluated and reported
- provide the governing body with regular reports on the progress of cohorts and groups of students, and an evaluation of key milestones
- increase opportunities for students to provide feedback on new initiatives and their learning experiences, and to offer ideas to support improvement.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, students, the Chair of the Governing Body and seven representatives. A tour of the school was conducted including visits to English and mathematics lessons. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

Following the inspection senior leadership roles were revised to focus on the priorities identified. Staffing changes have taken place in mathematics, including the recruitment of a lead practitioner in mathematics to commence next term. The timetable has been adjusted from three to five lessons per day. Curriculum time for English and mathematics has increased. A new Vice Chair to the Governing Body was appointed this term. The age range of the college has changed from 11-14 to 11-16 years.

Main findings

The principal and senior leaders have taken immediate action to make the improvements required for Winstanley to be judged 'good'. This is firmly supported by staff and the governing body. The frequency of progress tracking has increased to sharpen the analysis of students' performance to inform intervention. Training for middle leaders is planned to strengthen the use of data, and to bring greater consistency in quality, and impact. This will require regular meetings with senior leaders to ensure that accountability for teaching quality and achievement is understood and embedded.

Senior leaders are making use of a wider range of evidence sources in reaching judgements on teaching. The programme of work scrutiny, learning walks, lesson observation and the gathering of student views provides more opportunities for teachers to receive feedback. Teaching and learning meetings have been introduced to share and develop good practice. This is already helping to focus attention on the features of teaching that required improvement and development. Subject areas have identified their own priorities such as questioning, critical thinking, pace and challenge to incorporate into lessons. Specific programmes are in operation for teachers who require targeted support. Capacity is being improved in mathematics through recruitment, training and visits to observe good practice in teaching and leadership.

Discussions with students suggest that the college would benefit from gathering views on their learning experiences. Students would like to bring forward ideas that would contribute towards positive attitudes and improved attendance. There are strong feelings amongst some students about having to remain outside at break and lunchtime. They are not sure whether staff trust them to take responsibility for their

behaviour. Given that the college is in transition towards an 11-16 age range, the strengthening of 'student voice' would be an appropriate priority.

Arrangements have been made for an external review of governance. In the meantime the governing body have agreed to re-introduce a steering group who will monitor the actions in the improvement plan. Individual governors are making visits to the college and accessing training to improve their knowledge and expertise. Members of the governing body do not receive enough information about the progress of students as they move through the college. Monitoring information held in the college is not always shared to keep governors up-to-date with priorities and progress. Since the inspection the governing body has appointed a school improvement partner to provide an external view. They are very clear about the need to involve external partners to validate the college's work.

The Ofsted action plan is sharply focused on the priority areas for improvement, and training opportunities. Measureable success criteria and milestones are not detailed enough for progress to be rigorously checked. Details on monitoring, evaluation and reporting require further work.

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 college has commissioned a range of external support to provide a robust evaluation of the college's work. The school improvement partner will make termly visits. A local 'challenge partnership' of four schools has agreed to provide external quality assurance across settings to evaluate actions taken to improve. The college has worked effectively to identify good practice linked to priorities for specific teachers and subjects. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these activities.

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

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikic
Her Majesty's Inspector