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Deborah Hollister
Headteacher
Manningtree High School
Colchester Road
Lawford
CO11 2BW

Dear Miss Hollister

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Manningtree High School

Following my visit to your academy on 18 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 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:

- set clear targets and milestones for measuring how well all staff are engaging boys' interest in learning so that they all maintain their concentration, contribute well during group work and are made to work hard
- welcome further external scrutiny of the school's work to validate your views that improvements are being made at a suitable rate.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your team of senior leaders, three members of the governing body, a representative from the North East Essex Education Partnership and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. A

learning walk of the school including brief visit to lessons with you gave me the opportunity to observe students' learning.

Context

Since the last inspection six new teachers have joined the academy. New appointments and internal promotion have strengthened the leadership of English and mathematics. Both subjects have a new subject leader and assistant leader. A deputy headteacher seconded to the school for two days each week from the North East Essex Education Partnership adds further leadership capacity to your team of senior leaders.

Main findings

The proportion of students attaining five or more C grades including English and mathematics increased this year but overall results remained below the national average and the academy's own targets.

Since September you have taken prompt action to improve this by strengthening the leadership of the academy, tackling some ineffective teaching and implementing detailed plans for improvement. You have shared your vision for improving the academy and reaffirmed the expectations of all staff in helping to realise this over the next year. Regular scrutiny and training for all staff are becoming firmly established.

Areas for improvement are known and are rightly prioritised in the academy's action plan. This includes ambitious targets and regular milestones to check that improvements will be made within the given timescales. Improving assessment, increasing independent learning and adding challenge in lessons are being monitored closely. However, criteria to gauge how well teaching is improving over time do not include clear targets to show that teachers are engaging boys well enough.

You have renewed the focus on improving the quality of teaching through regular observations, tracking of students' progress and scrutinising work. The evidence gained from these procedures is validated through periodic visits by an external consultant. This does not include external reviews of the effectiveness of all subjects.

Governors continue to provide regular support and challenge for you based on their understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They are fully committed to making this academy a good one and acknowledge the important role they have in rigorously monitoring the academy's progress in order to secure long-term improvements.

PROTECT-INSPECTION



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 links you have forged with other local schools provides you with good quality advice from experienced leaders and good support from effective teachers shared within the partnership. Additional consultancy support is purchased to monitor the academy's work. Less use is made of the local authority to regularly scrutinise the work of subject leaders and the effectiveness of their departments.

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector