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Mrs C Jackman
Headteacher
Hayle Community School
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Dear Mrs Jackman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hayle Community School

Following my visit to your school on 25 October 2013, with Lesley Ann Jones, Ofsted's Regional Director for the South West, 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 July 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:

- increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - drawing on outstanding practice outside the school, particularly in matching lessons to students' varying levels of learning
 - agree a teaching and learning policy based on high expectations
 - making sure that subject leaders expect and achieve a consistently good quality of teaching and learning in their departments, including the marking of students' books

- add measurable outcomes to the school improvement plan to help governors in monitoring the school's improvement

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, students, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Six lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders and a sample of students' books were examined. Behaviour was observed at break and lunchtime.

Main findings

Improvements in monitoring the academic progress of all students led to an increase in GCSE results in 2013, including for the most able students. A higher proportion of students than in previous years attained the top GCSE grades. Underachieving students are identified early and appropriate interventions are provided to get them back on track to achieve their target grades. Particular attention is given to the progress of students receiving support through the pupil premium. As a result, the students are catching up with others in the school. Results in mathematics were higher than in English. English teachers' expectations are not high enough across the school, as seen in the learning objectives for lessons in Years 8 and 9.

Teachers are beginning to make better use of the system for checking progress in planning their lessons, but with varying success in meeting students' different levels of learning. In the most successful lessons, teachers have high expectations of students' learning. For example, a Year 10 science lesson was based on the challenging learning objective of investigating and explaining the process of diffusion. The teacher explained clearly the skills he expected of students at different levels, and used his strong subject knowledge to demonstrate the quality of investigation expected. During the lesson, he asked probing questions, also at different levels, which extended students' understanding. The students enjoyed finding out for themselves and applied their numeracy skills in working out the rates of diffusion in different substances.

In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the teacher checked students' calculations on mini-whiteboards, and addressed any misconceptions, before setting them off on independent work. Not all teachers are checking students' understanding and adapting activities, pace and their questions in the lesson enough to ensure all make good progress. Students are not given sufficient opportunities to apply their literacy skills, including speaking and listening, in lessons. The presentation of their work is not of a consistently high standard across all subjects. Teachers would benefit from sharing outstanding practice in other schools and drawing on this to inform a teaching and learning policy that raises their expectations.

Most teachers are applying the school's new marking policy by writing comments that help students to know what to do to improve their work. One of the best examples was seen in history where the teacher wrote questions to develop students' understanding. Students respond to teachers' comments, using a green pen, but they are not always applying the improvement in their work. In some books, for example, the teacher is repeating the same point for improvement over a number of weeks and the student is not demonstrating it in their work.

Subject leaders are not all ensuring the marking policy is making a difference to students' work, or that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Senior leaders are developing subject leaders' monitoring skills, such as in lesson observation and analysis of progress data, scrutiny of students' books and teachers' planning. The evaluation of this information is not sharp enough, however, to identify what needs to be done specifically to improve teaching and learning at a faster rate.

Governors are now better able to hold the school to account for the standards it achieves, due to the school's improved monitoring of students' progress. They are determined that the school will improve quickly, however, the school improvement plan lacks measurable outcomes to help governors check that the required improvements are being made within the set timescale.

Increased supervision at break and lunchtime is promoting improvement in behaviour around the school.

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

Until recently, the local authority has provided limited support for the school to help it raise standards. This was because previous inspection reports were positive and the decline in standards was not identified. The local authority is now appropriately monitoring the school's performance and identifying outstanding practice elsewhere for the school to draw on.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector