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Mrs Shirley Havard
Headteacher
Challney High School for Girls
Addington Way
LU4 9FJ

Dear Mrs Havard

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Challney High School for Girls

Following my visit to your school on 5 November 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 21 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking incisive and urgent action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to ensure that:

- teaching provides consistent challenge and secures good progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, a group of senior students, members of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and other documentation were evaluated. HMI invited the senior staff to join him in the joint observation of teaching. Four lessons were evaluated and the views put forward by senior staff matched the judgements given by the inspector. HMI also reviewed a sample of the students' work from the classes visited.

Main findings

The outcomes of the 2013 public examinations were not available to the inspection team when they visited the school at the end of May. When these were published in August the GCSE results showed a modest improvement on previous years. The percentage of students making three levels of progress in English and mathematics showed a clear improvement and the percentage of students securing a higher level pass in the English Baccalaureate subjects (English, mathematics, science, history or geography, and a modern foreign language) was above the local authority average. The gap between the examination results secured by disadvantaged students and their peers has narrowed since 2012.

The governing body commissioned a review of governance from a national leader of governance. As a result, the work of the governing body has been restructured appropriately. It is understandable that the commissioning of the new school building absorbed a great deal of the governing body's time, however, it is imperative that governors hold the school to account for the quality of teaching and for the students' progress.

Since the last inspection the senior leadership team has focussed on the quality of teaching, however there is still a great deal to do. Where teaching requires improvement lessons are dominated by research and copy exercises, these lessons provide too little direct teaching of new subject knowledge to challenge and inspire students. For example: an information technology lesson failed to provide sufficient emphasis on the use of software applications; the focus of an English lesson on war poetry was disjointed; a geography lesson on climate change failed to explain the fundamentals of climate, and a science lesson on digestion helped students understand the role of individual elements but not how the whole digestive system worked.

Adjustments are being made to how the school records and monitors student progress by teaching group. However, there are less than 25 teaching weeks before Year 11 begin the 2014 public examinations, it is essential that senior leaders ensure challenging teaching secures good progress.

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 external review of governance commissioned through the local authority has helped restructure the work of the governing body. Local authority support needs to ensure that good teaching is securing good progress.

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

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector