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1 November 2013

Mrs Ella Brett
Headteacher
Ruskin Sports College - A Community High School
Ruskin Road
Crewe
Cheshire
CW2 7JT

Dear Mrs Brett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ruskin Sports College – A Community High School, Cheshire East

Following my visit to your school on 31 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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:

- keep a continuing and urgent focus on the achievement of boys and those students who are known to speak English as an additional language (EAL.). The school's action plan rightly and clearly identifies these groups as a priority
- reduce significantly gaps in achievement between other groups of students, notably those who are eligible for the pupil premium, those who have a disability or special educational needs and higher ability students
- amend the action plan to make very precise links between intended actions and their impact on the progress of the above groups
- Ensure that:
 - in checking the quality of teaching, feedback to teachers is clearly linked to the Teaching Standards and to precisely targeted professional development and make best use of good and outstanding practice in the school and of external support

- all marking is consistently helpful, across all subjects and teachers, in providing detailed targets for the improvement of students' work and time to respond to their teachers' advice
 - all students, especially those groups who find writing difficult, have enough opportunities to practise their writing skills in all subjects
 - all senior leaders analyse information about students' progress effectively enough so that all staff can use the information more quickly to improve students' progress, particularly in English.
- Intensify work with parents and the local authority to improve even more rapidly the attendance of all groups of students.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, representatives of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plan was evaluated. A brief tour of the school was made and meetings were held with other senior and middle leaders. Samples of students' work were, scrutinised and other documentation was considered, for example, the outcomes of activities to check the quality of teaching and the impact of performance management.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been a significant number of staffing changes, including at senior and middle leadership levels.

Main findings

- It must be borne in mind that at the time of writing only one working month has passed since the inspection, so it is too early to judge the impact of some of the measures that you have taken.
- In this short time you and your senior leaders have worked with great determination to galvanise the staff to respond positively to what was for many a disappointing judgement about the school.
- As a result of some very difficult discussions and actions on your part, the great majority of staff now realise the reasons for this judgement and accept it. Teachers met during my visit felt that actions by you and senior leaders now enable them to work more cooperatively together as a staff.
- One important step in 'getting to good' is the school's realisation of the importance of focusing on the progress of different groups of students and using information to pre-empt, identify and intervene quickly where they are not doing as well as they could.
- These groups include boys, those who are supported by the pupil premium, some higher ability pupils, those who have a disability or special educational needs and those who speak EAL.
- Your action plan is thorough and detailed, and it places a strong focus on the achievement of boys and the increasing number of students who speak EAL. However, the plan needs minor adjustment to speed up the progress of other

underperforming groups as quickly as possible.

- The school's actions set down appropriate priorities for improving the school and the measures you and senior leaders have taken show your capacity to improve the school. Performance in mathematics and geography has improved but some GCSE results, including English, did not improve in the summer 2013 examinations.
- Students enter the school with standards that are significantly below average and some groups have considerable gaps in reading and especially writing. The school needs to intensify its work on improving writing through all subjects, with a particular focus on these groups.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic and understand that there is much urgent work to be done in order for the school to become good within two years. Marking still shows some inconsistency in providing precise enough targets for pupils to improve their work. The sharpness of departmental planning also needs to improve.
- Governors are highly committed to the school and some are actively involved in supporting subjects where they have particular professional expertise, for example, in English. Governors show very good understanding of pupils' progress and now recognise the importance of checking the progress of different student groups.
- You and the governors do not shrink from giving hard messages about the salary progression of underperforming teachers. Governors are equally clear about the need for all governors to be actively engaged in improving the school rapidly. Governors have a strong capacity and will to help drive the school forward.
- 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 local authority has become increasingly aware of the school's need for intensive support. They are very committed to its improvement and as well as access to regular training events, they are providing at least five days of the School Intervention Officer's time to support the school, in particular in English.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

Her Majesty's Inspector