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11 November 2013

Mrs Heather Aaron
Headteacher
Wentworth High School
Wentworth Road
Eccles
Manchester
M30 9BP

Dear Mrs Aaron

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Wentworth High School

Following my visit to your school on 8 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

This visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in March 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress toward the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

It is recommended that the next inspection be a full section 5 reinspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Strategic Director of Children's Services for Salford.

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good and all students make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 by:
 - making sure that teachers plan activities to meet students' individual needs by drawing on all the information available to them about how well their students are doing
 - reducing the amount of time that teachers spend talking so that there is more time in lessons for students to take part in well-planned activities that encourage them to think and find things out for themselves
 - making sure that marking of students' work is of consistently high quality so that students know what they have done well and what they need to do to make the work even better
 - making sure that the information collected on students' progress is reliable and based on accurate assessments of how well students are doing.

- Improve students' behaviour by:
 - providing students with activities in lessons that stimulate their interest and fire their enthusiasm so that they all develop positive attitudes to their learning
 - making sure that teachers deal quickly with those students who, on occasion, may disturb the learning of others.

- Strengthen the effect that leaders and managers have on students' achievement by:
 - continuing to develop the skills of subject leaders so that they take full responsibility for improving the quality of teaching in their departments
 - making sure that information collected on students' progress is reliable and analysed rigorously so that governors are able to hold leaders and managers to account fully for the quality of teaching and learning.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 8 November 2013

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, a group of six pupils from Years 8, 9 and 10, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Assistant Director of Children's Services from the local authority. The inspector jointly observed two lessons with the deputy headteacher and he observed the feedback given to teachers. He scrutinised documents showing the actions the school has taken and their impact. He also checked the school's single central record, which contains checks on staff appointments.

Context

Five teachers have left the school since the first monitoring inspection. Ten new members of staff have been appointed: six teachers, including two in the English department and two in the mathematics department, as well as four non-teaching members of staff. Appropriate checks have been carried out to ensure that staff are suitably qualified to work at the school. The school is on track to move in September 2014 to new buildings, which are being built adjacent to the existing school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher is driving improvements forward purposefully and with a good deal of success. This is demonstrable from students' improved achievement as well as a better quality of teaching. The school has capitalised well on the support brokered by the local authority. Good use is being made of links with other schools, for example, a recent link with a local school to audit and support the history department. The school has benefited from links with a National Support School to improve the quality of teaching. It is a good sign that the school is increasingly using in-school support to improve the quality of teaching further. A team of teachers whose teaching is of high quality have been trained as coaches and they have formed coaching partnerships with their colleagues. All teachers attend compulsory training on teaching and learning every three weeks. Teachers' assessments of students are proving to be accurate as examination results are tending to align with teachers' predictions. In the joint lesson observations and feedback to teachers, the deputy headteacher demonstrated his accurate judgement and unequivocal and helpful feedback to the teachers.

All middle leaders are building on their skills through a training course leading to a national leadership qualification. It is notable that all have prepared statements relating to what they will achieve on the course, and these are focused on improving teaching and learning and students' achievement. Middle leaders are implementing a schedule of monitoring across their departments that includes checks on teachers' planning and marking and joint lesson observations with senior leaders. The links between senior and middle leaders are clear, as are the responsibilities for holding

staff to account. Middle leaders are working together well. They are sharing good practice and gaining a consistency of approach as a consequence. A good example is the school's revised marking policy that was formed by middle leaders before being rolled across the school. Students who met with the inspector confirmed they are getting much better guidance through marking than they did in the past. Where there are flaws in middle leadership, these are known to senior leaders who are tackling them with suitable rigour and swiftness.

The governing body is moving forward at a pace. It continues to benefit from liaison with a National Leader of Governance. The Chair of the Governing Body has been successful in driving forward the involvement of governors in the school. All governors have links with various departments or aspects of the school's work. Nearly all governors have received training on the recruitment of staff. The Chair of the Governing Body is undertaking a training course that will lead to a leadership accreditation with the National College for Leadership. Governors are provided with comprehensive information that is made appropriate to their needs, including a bespoke 'dashboard' of information that gives them key data at a glance. Additionally, the governing body has received training in how to interpret attainment and progress data and how they compare with national data. These moves forward have put the governors in a strong position to hold the school to account.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The quality of teaching across the school is improving. At the time of the last inspection, around a half of the teaching was good or better. Around three quarters of the teaching is now good or better with a small amount that is outstanding. The school has surpassed the milestone targets in its action plan for improvements to the quality of teaching.
- Teaching is monitored well. Teachers who require them have support plans. Lesson observations invariably focus on the quality of learning and this was evident in the feedback to teachers given by the deputy headteacher.
- Lesson observations show that teachers are increasingly using information they have to plan activities matched to students' needs. However, there is still room to challenge students more through questioning that puts them on the spot and gets them thinking harder, and through the pitching of activities that are even more closely matched to the abilities of different groups of students.
- The 2013 examination results show that there has been significant improvement in English and, to a lesser degree, mathematics. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics has risen by 13 percentage points since 2012. The proportion of students gaining A* to C grades in English and mathematics separately have risen by 20 percentage points and 4 percentage respectively.
- The number of students making expected rates of progress in English in Year

11 increased last year by 25 percentage points and the proportion who exceeded these increased by 28 percentage points. In mathematics, the improvement was less strong with expected rates increasing by 10 percentage points and more than expected by 6 percentage points.

- Overall, the gaps between different groups of students are closing. For example, the gap between the students supported by the pupil premium funding (extra money provided by the government) and other students achieving five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics reduced from 20% in 2012 to 7% in 2013.
- Students' behaviour has improved. Incidents of low-level disruption have reduced dramatically. A comparison between the data for this term and the data of the same period in 2012 shows incidents have dropped by two thirds. The letters sent home to parents of students who have received sanctions have proven to be very influential. Changes to systems, such as including a grade for attitudes to learning on students' reports, are proving to be effective. Students who met with the inspector said behaviour is almost always good and where there are pockets of disruption, they are now more effectively dealt with by staff.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The examination results in a few subjects, such as history, health and social care and product design, were disappointing. The school's evaluation shows there are remaining concerns, in particular with history. Senior leaders have a clarity about these and are purposefully tackling them.
- Students' achievement in mathematics, although improved on the previous year, is lagging behind the gains made in English. Senior leaders and governors are aware that this is primarily a result of substantial turbulence in staffing in the mathematics department. A permanent staffing complement was achieved only in September 2013. Encouragingly, the school's mathematics data show that 67% of Year 11 students are predicted to make the expected rate of progress in 2014, compared to 58% in 2013.

External support

The local authority has a very clear and accurate view of the school and it has confidently adjusted its plans in support of the school as improvements have become evident. A good example is the lessening of external support as the school moves to improving teaching and learning more from its own staff resources. The local authority is being helpful in responding to issues as they emerge. It has been instrumental in facilitating guidance for the history department. The relationships between the local authority and the governing body are strong. The local authority rightly has confidence in the headteacher.