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Gary House
Lady Hawkins High School
Park View
HR5 3AR

Dear Mr House

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lady Hawkins High School

Following my visit to your academy on 27 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 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:

- develop the existing action plan to provide more detailed, specific actions for improvement with clear timescales and support governors in monitoring the plan by providing measurable success criteria for each aspect and identify who is responsible for driving and evaluating each activity
- use the evidence gathered through your department reviews to set out sharp targets for department improvement
- ensure that assessment data is carefully analysed and shared with heads of department, with an expectation of rapid action and intervention for under-achieving students, classes and groups of students
- support rapid improvement in the quality of teaching through the development of individualised training programmes.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and a small group of governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. I made short visits with you to a number of lessons and observed students during lunch. I also examined the outcomes of the most recent tracking data.

Main findings

You are clear about what the school needs to do in order to secure a good judgement at the next inspection. You recognise that teaching is not securely good across the school and as a result not all students make enough progress. However the actions in your improvement plan are too broad to give staff specific guidance on what needs to be done. Governors do not have clarity over what they should expect to see change as a result of improvement activities.

You have begun a series of detailed reviews of the performance of each subject area; these include analysis of examination performance, observation of all teaching, and self-evaluation by subject leaders. The reviews of subjects identified in the last inspection as being in need of improvement (history, geography and science) were prioritised and have already been completed. The reviews are a useful summary of current performance but do not lead to sharply identified actions for improvement. These would support heads of department in developing their improvement activities and help governors in their partner work with departments.

Since the inspection, the focus has been on improving teachers' planning and making sure lessons can better meet the needs of all learners. You believe teacher planning has already improved but you are not systematically checking that this is the case. As a result, you are not sure if better planning is securely in place across all staff. Further planned interventions to improve teaching are currently focussed around training events for all teachers. You and other leaders need to accelerate the rate of improvement through the development of more individualised training programmes, including coaching support and work with other schools, for those staff whose teaching is not consistently good.

You have made sure that students in Key Stage 4 have been set more challenging targets. However, assessment data collected by senior leaders this week indicates that students are not yet making the expected levels of progress in many subjects, including geography and history. Heads of department need to use this information to deliver intervention programmes at department level to ensure that all students are making rapid 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

Governors are developing plans with senior leaders to use a local schools' partnership (including an outstanding and a good school) to provide additional support on improving the quality of teaching; initial links have been made to support this work but the arrangements lack the specific detail required to deliver rapid improvements. No formal review of governance was required in the inspection report but the governors are keen to improve and have arranged training sessions for next term.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah James
Her Majesty's Inspector