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David Baker
Headteacher
Anthony Gell School
Wirksworth
DE4 4DX

Dear Mr Baker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Anthony Gell School

Following my visit to your school on 28 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 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:

- ensure teachers use progress data to better meet the needs of students, especially disabled students, those with special educational needs and those in receipt of pupil premium funding
- amend the school action plan, so that it lists those members of staff responsible for monitoring and evaluating actions, and states actions and milestones for success more clearly

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, three senior leaders, four representatives of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and a range of other documentation was considered. You took me on a tour of classrooms during which we visited a variety of subjects and year groups, including the sixth form.

Context

While there have been no staff changes since your school was inspected in September 2013, four teachers were new to the school at that time, having started that month. This includes a specialist teacher with responsibility for those students who are disabled or with special educational needs. Four teachers left the school during the previous academic year.

Main findings

You have made improving the quality of teaching a priority. To help achieve this, your assistant headteacher responsible for teaching and learning has introduced a new performance management system which is more rigorous. Bespoke targets are set for teachers, and the number of formal lesson observations conducted has trebled. Lesson observation forms have been redesigned to include the areas for development from your recent inspection, including the need to use questioning more effectively. Teachers have received training in this area and also in better meeting the needs of students. A new support package is in place for those teachers whose practice is judged to be less than good, and this is helping the majority of those members of staff.

Teaching assistants are being held to account more closely for the progress of the students they work with. They have had training to help them increase their impact on achievement. The practice of teaching assistants is being observed separately from the teachers leading the lesson, and this has raised the status of this role. It is too early to judge any impact of these changes.

The achievement of students in English was an area of concern at the time of your recent inspection. You have reviewed the organisation of these classes and the level of GCSE examination the students will take. The first set of results produced by Year 11 students indicate improved progress in this subject.

The quality of data on student progress is improving. Student progress meetings now take place more regularly, and underachieving students are more readily identified. However, teachers do not make good enough use of this information in meeting the needs of individual students, especially with regards to those students in receipt of pupil premium funding, disabled students and those who have special educational needs.

The Governing Body has been reinvigorated by the challenges outlined by the recent inspection. Extra meetings of governors have been arranged with a view to them becoming more focused in their work, especially with regards to the achievement of disabled students, those who have special educational needs, and those students in receipt of pupil premium funding. Governors are aware that they have not been rigorous enough in holding senior leaders to account for the achievement of these

students and they are determined to change that. To help with this, a governor is about to receive training on understanding and interpreting student progress data.

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 week after your inspection, the local authority representative provided support through an English consultant, who helped review the performance of the department; he also contributed to the new English action plan. The local authority representative is committed to spending a day every half-term in the school to support the headteacher, and she is organising a review of student achievement, focusing on disabled students, those who have special educational needs, and those in receipt of pupil premium funding.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector