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20 December 2013

Phillip Wheatley
Headteacher
Raynes Park High School
Bushey Road
London
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Dear Mr Wheatley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Raynes Park High School

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 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 June 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 last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- evaluate the impact of teaching on students' achievement more precisely so that all leaders and teachers understand how to speed up students' progress as they move through the school
- ensure that targets for students in Key Stage 4 reflect higher levels of challenge and are set in the same way across all subjects.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the leaders of English and mathematics, representatives from the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plans. We visited lessons, to check the impact of teachers' planning on the achievement of different groups of students.

Context

Since the last inspection links have been established with good and outstanding schools in the borough so that leaders and governors can learn from the practice of others.

Main findings

You have a realistic and accurate understanding of the school's performance. School leaders and governors are committed to improvement. The school has settled down after the many changes to leadership, staffing and the range of subjects that have been introduced during the last year. Leaders are beginning to raise the expectations of staff and students and instil a sense of urgency, but there remains a lot to be done to make sure that achievement improves rapidly.

Students' achievements are celebrated around the school and rewarded. As a result, their attitudes to learning are improving. Attendance and punctuality have improved steadily, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of students who stay away from school for long periods has reduced considerably since the same time last year. Students eligible for pupil premium funding are attending school more regularly and find it easier to study, because additional resources and support are available at the end of the school day and during holidays.

Information about students' progress is collected every half-term. This is shared with students, staff and parents and carers. Challenging targets in mathematics at Key Stage 4 are not in line with the lower targets that are set in other subjects. As a result, expectations of what students are capable of achieving are not high enough. Leaders and staff would benefit from external support in using data analysis to compare the school's performance with other schools nationally and to set more ambitious targets for all students.

The best teachers are being used well to share ideas and model effective practice. More frequent checks are making the leaders of subjects more accountable for improving teaching. However, these checks do not link evidence about students'

progress precisely enough to the quality of teaching observed. Consequently, tasks and activities are not always matched accurately to students' needs and abilities.

You have worked collaboratively with the local authority improvement partner to draw up improvement plans that refer explicitly to key areas for improvement from the previous inspection report and set realistic targets to measure improvement. Governors and the local authority are fully involved in reviewing these targets.

Governors are committed and keen to develop a more accurate understanding of what needs to be done; they accept that there needs to be more rapid improvement and they are rapidly developing their knowledge, skills and understanding to provide the necessary challenge. Training and support in using information about students' achievement has helped them to design a useful overview of the progress of different groups of students so that they can compare it to other groups nationally. It also helps them identify trends and ask the correct questions when they see gaps emerging.

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 responded quickly to the findings of the inspection report and provides regular support and additional funding to the school. Three additional members of staff have been employed to support English and mathematics. The school improvement officer carries out regular reviews and checks the quality of the leaders' work. The links with good and outstanding local schools have been set up to share good and outstanding practice. However, these links are in the early stages of development so it is too soon to see the impact.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Wellham
Her Majesty's Inspector