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17 January 2014

Mr Neil Shaw  
Leasowes High School  
Kent Road  
Halesowen  
B62 8PJ

Dear Mr Shaw

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leasowes High School**

Following my visit to your school on 17 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 October 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:

- rigorously monitor improvements in teaching including careful triangulation of evidence over time
- ensure that governors are appropriately involved in monitoring and evaluating actions
- ensure that success criteria are measurable over the short, medium and long term where appropriate
- ensure that recently strengthened monitoring activities are published over an academic year so that all staff are fully aware of when and how they will be held accountable.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A learning walk also took place, with brief visits made to a range of lessons, including discussions with students about their work, and scrutiny of Key Stage 4 students' mathematics work was undertaken. The school action plan was evaluated.

## **Context**

Since the last section 5 inspection there has only been one change to staffing which was already planned. However, in April there will be a number of staff departures, including from key roles, following the second round of redundancies in the school.

## **Main findings**

You are taking effective action to move the school forward. There has been a positive response to the Ofsted inspection judgements from school leaders, governors and staff, all of whom are committed to rapid improvement.

The school's development plan identifies appropriate actions to address the key areas for improvement, including who is responsible and how these will be monitored. In some cases there is already evidence of significant impact. For instance action taken to improve attendance has resulted in the school reaching national averages for the first time and their best ever attendance figures in December 2013. Early indications from the school's own data, suggest that this is beginning to have a positive effect on achievement, particularly for those students whose attendance was the poorest. However, a few actions need to have clearer success criteria that are measurable in terms of improving outcomes for students.

Exclusions, whilst remaining higher than average, have decreased significantly as a result of the recently introduced behaviour modification programme. This, allied to the development of an isolation room within the school, and the successful use of an off-site provision at the Greenhill Centre, has enabled leaders to reintegrate disengaged students through meeting their individual needs.

You have introduced a more robust system for holding middle leaders to account for students' progress. Data collection and analysis for all subjects is now taking place each half term and subject leaders are required to account for those students making less than expected progress, including actions taken and the impact of these. The tracking of student progress has been further strengthened by the changes made to the pastoral system in the school with a move from House Leaders to Student Achievement Managers for each year group who can rapidly identify underperformance in a cohort or group across subjects and take early action.

You have taken action to ensure that quality assurance systems are more robust and teachers are now much clearer about what is expected of them and how they will be

monitored and held to account for their students' progress. A published annual calendar of monitoring and review activities will ensure that these become embedded school practices and that teachers fully understand the range of evidence that should be taken into account when judgements are made about the quality of teaching over time. The school should ensure that records reflect this range of evidence and that systems for moderation of judgements are part of the process.

All teachers now know which students are eligible for free school meals or belong to other vulnerable groups, and evidence noted during the visit suggested that teachers are now more routinely planning to meet their needs. As a result, behaviour for learning continues to be a strength of the school, with students engaged and enthused by their learning in the lessons visited.

The school's new marking policy, although not yet fully embedded, is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of feedback. Students spoken to were very clear about their targets, where they were currently and what they needed to do to improve further. Evidence in books showed that many teachers were making effective use of 'what went well' and 'even better if' statements and requiring students to respond to marking at regular intervals. However, this is not yet consistent across or within subjects.

As a result of the improvements made to date, current in-school data, shows marked improvement of progress, particularly in mathematics for Year 11 students. In Year 7, those students who enter the school at or below a level 3 are now accessing the Phoenix Centre which is providing focused support for literacy and numeracy. Data for the Autumn term shows good progress for this group, with all students on track for challenging end of Year 7 targets.

A range of training to support the improvements required has been provided and is on-going. The school has also devised its own progression programme to support internal promotion to leadership roles, which staff can apply for. They are then required to work on a whole school priority project which will impact on improved outcomes for students. This has been effective in developing leadership capacity internally and you report that the school plans to work with local universities to gain accreditation or badging.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and are very clear about the progress made so far and the next steps required, including the need for governors to develop their role in monitoring progress. They offer support as well as challenge and have been appropriately involved in refining the school's action plans for improvement.

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 provided appropriate support. They are confident that you and your senior leaders are clear about the required actions and are willing to support the school in implementing these.

The school has made good use of links with good and outstanding local schools to draw on support and advice and is part of the Halesowen Learning Community of schools. The school also has useful links with local universities to support training.

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

Yours sincerely

Merryl Ford

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority