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Mat Hunter
Headteacher
Icknield Community College
Love Lane
Watlington
Oxfordshire
OX49 5RB

Dear Mr Hunter

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Icknield Community College

Following my visit to your school on 10 January 2014, 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 November 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including records of lesson observations made by school leaders and information about students' current achievement. You showed me round the school to see the students at work in lessons.

Context

One teacher and one teaching assistant have left the school since the inspection and one part-time teacher has started.

Main findings

The headteacher's resolute leadership is resulting in swift improvements in teaching and students' achievement. Along with other senior leaders and governors, he has accurately identified the right priorities and actions to take to make sure the school becomes good. He has rightly set challenging targets for students' achievement. A programme of training for teachers, linked clearly with the areas for improvement identified following the inspection, is already beginning to have a positive impact. For example, teachers are increasingly matching tasks in lessons precisely to students' abilities so that students are challenged more. Leaders' regular observations suggest that the proportion of teaching that is good or better is growing. As a result, students are achieving more than they have done in the past. For example, Year 11 students are on course to make good progress in English by the end of Key Stage 4. Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and disabled students and those with special education needs are making greater progress than before because of the more effective extra help they receive in and outside of lessons.

Senior leaders have improved the way in which students' achievement is tracked throughout the school. All staff are now clear about which classes, groups and individual students are not yet achieving well enough. Senior leaders have put robust systems in place to make sure that when this is the case the right action is taken to increase students' progress. Consequently, all staff are now more accountable for raising students' achievement.

Governance continues to improve. Governors are making effective use of information about students' achievement to challenge school leaders. For example, in a recent meeting governors asked leaders to justify how pupil premium funding is being spent in order to improve the achievement of students eligible for this funding. They have also challenged the relatively new subject leader for English about what improvements need to be made to raise students' achievement in English. Governors have rightly made sure that parents have had a good opportunity to give their views about the outcome of the inspection and to ask questions. Governors have played a full part in developing the school's effective improvement plan and they have a clear role in evaluating improvements.

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 commissioned support for the school from an independent consultant, who has already assisted governors with the headteacher's performance management and made sure that the school's improvement plan is fit for purpose. Future work has been planned to develop the ways that leaders at all levels improve teaching and students' achievement. Further support from a local authority adviser is focused on improving attendance and the achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium, disabled students and those with special educational needs. The local authority is planning to regularly monitor and evaluate the school's progress but this process is not yet in place.

The school is participating in an Ofsted training programme aimed at improving the achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium. The headteacher has also made arrangements to receive support from a National Leader of Education, who is the headteacher of Matthew Arnold School, a nearby good school.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes

Her Majesty's Inspector