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20 January 2014

Mr Jeremy Harris  
Headteacher  
Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School College of Performing Arts  
Wood Green Road  
Wednesbury  
WS10 9QS

Dear Mr Harris

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School College of Performing Arts**

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 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. The school should take further action to:

- refine the school action plan to:
  - reduce key actions into small steps, linked to measurable targets that must be met along the way to being a good school
  - sharpen the timescales for monitoring to make sure this is both rigorous and frequent
- ensure, as a matter of urgency, that the external review of the knowledge, skills and understanding of the governing body is carried out and that governors receive any training necessary to allow them to ask searching questions to further challenge school leaders
- make sure that all teachers use the new marking and feedback policy through regular checks being carried out by all subject leaders who then urgently challenge teachers where weaknesses are identified

- sharpen the way in which attendance data is used to monitor the attendance of individual students, and groups of students, by:
  - finding out more about why these students have poor attendance
  - developing ways to encourage good attendance which are valued by students.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and other senior leaders, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body, leaders of English, maths and science and I held a telephone conversation with your school improvement advisor to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Together with your head of sixth form, you and I carried out a visit to a sixth form lesson in mathematics and in biology to look at how well students were challenged in their learning. You and I also carried out a series of short visits to a selection of Year 10 and Year 11 English groups to look at work in books and the suitability of teaching to make sure students of all abilities work at full stretch. The post-Ofsted action plan was evaluated.

## **Context**

The Governors have supported you in agreeing to make two new appointments to further strengthen teaching and learning. A new English teacher with a specific responsibility for sixth form teaching and learning will be appointed, and also a new science teacher. These posts are currently being advertised.

## **Main findings**

You have acted quickly to address weaknesses seen in the recent inspection in the quality of marking and feedback across the school. The new marking policy has been written and teachers received training in its use in December. This has been introduced to students this week and they are now aware of the use of Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time (DIRT) which will give students time to act on the advice given by their teachers. Subject leaders now need to check this closely to make sure it is carried out consistently by all teachers and to act on any weaknesses identified through their checks.

Subject leaders are currently writing and introducing new plans for teaching that include a higher level of challenge for all students. For example, in mathematics more middle ability students will follow the examination board's higher scheme of work and will therefore be better prepared for entry to the higher level examination.

Where teaching requires improvement you have arranged for teachers to receive the support they need to develop their skills. A group of five teachers have recently started a six week improving teacher programme delivered through a local outstanding school. You are continuing to develop your outstanding teachers as they

use their skills to coach colleagues where their teaching is not yet consistently good, as part of your teaching and learning action group. This work is beginning to encourage the sharing of good practice seen in teaching and learning across all subjects.

You are also further developing leadership in the school through the introduction of your associate leadership team. These outstanding teachers are being given the opportunity to develop their skills at leading initiatives at a whole school level.

An external review of governance has been planned, but the date for this to take place has yet to be confirmed. This must take place as a matter of urgency.

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**

You have received effective support from your school improvement advisor and also from a local outstanding school that is helping you to improve the quality of teaching in the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Sandwell local authority and the Birmingham Diocesan Education Service.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**