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Mrs Jane Harris  
Headteacher  
Frankley Community High School  
New Street  
Frankley  
Birmingham  
B45 0EU

Dear Mrs Harris

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Frankley Community High School**

Following my visit to your school on 31 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 on 19 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:

- sharpen the quality of written feedback to teachers after both lesson observations and the checking of students' work so that there is a clearer focus on how well students are learning.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and other senior leaders, the subject leader for English, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's action plan and considered other documents related to leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and students' rates of attendance and exclusion. Together, we made short visits to a number of lessons where I had the opportunity to talk to some students.

## Context

There have been no significant changes to the context of the school since the section 5 inspection. School leaders are currently in discussion with the Department for Education in relation to the school becoming an academy within a multi-academy trust. In September 2013, the school changed its name to Balaam Wood Academy however it continues to operate legally under the name of Frankley Community High School.

## Main findings

You and other school leaders are taking decisive action to make improvements to students' achievement, attendance and behaviour, and to the quality of teaching.

In the eight school weeks since the section 5 inspection and my visit, leaders have adapted their approach to checking the quality of teaching. This means that where there are weaknesses in teaching, leaders can start to take quick action. You balance support for teachers with clear expectations that the quality of their teaching should improve quickly. We discussed that written feedback to teachers after lesson observations and when checking their students' books is not focused sharply enough on how well students are learning. My observations in lessons and your evidence indicate that there have been some improvements to the quality of marking and written feedback to students. More students are now being given clearer points for improvement, although you acknowledge there is still more to do to make this aspect a strength of teaching across all subjects.

The school's focus on improving students' literacy skills continues. Recent developments, such as changes to Key Stage 3 literacy workbooks, mean that there are more opportunities for students to write at length. You have re-emphasised to teachers the role they need to play in making sure that students take pride in the presentation of their work, spell words correctly and have opportunities in all lessons to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. At this stage, it is too soon to be confident that improvements in these aspects are being sustained.

Governors have made a good contribution to reviewing and refining the school's action plan, which focuses well on the key aspects identified at the section 5 inspection. In this, and other aspects, governors continue to provide appropriate challenge and support to school leaders.

Rates of absence and persistent absence continue to fall with significant improvements compared to the same period last year. Nevertheless, the number of students who are frequently absent from school remains well above the national figure for secondary schools and is a matter for concern. The school's internal evaluations show that incidents of poor behaviour and rates of exclusion are continuing to fall. In these aspects of the school's work, as in others, there is no complacency about the scale of the work that remains.

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 plans to support and challenge school leaders in their work to improve students' achievement and the quality of teaching through the deployment of a commissioned former headteacher. Unfortunately, this consultant only started this aspect of his support on the day of my visit and therefore it is not yet possible to evaluate the impact of this planned work. However, the consultant has already been providing support on school finance and other aspects. You and governors have valued this support you have received so far. Following the inspection, local authority officers provided constructive challenge to leaders when reviewing the school's action plan. The local authority has made a financial commitment to make sure that much needed repairs to the school buildings mean that they are fit for purpose.

School leaders have continued to access highly valued support from a local network of schools, the 'Oaks Collegiate', and have very recently also drawn from other external sources to provide helpful support and challenge to the English and mathematics teams. You are also supported by 'Education Central', the potential academy sponsor, and the work with its nominated education adviser has been formalised to coincide with planned regular reviews of the school's progress.

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

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**