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12 February 2014

Mr Michael Liddicoat  
Headteacher  
The Archbishop's School  
St Stephens Hill  
Canterbury  
CT2 7AP

Dear Mr Liddicoat

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Archbishop's School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 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:

- monitor the progress of those students eligible for the pupil premium funding to ensure that they make progress in line with pupils nationally.
- work more stringently to ensure that teachers demonstrate high expectations of students' achievement
- improve the tidiness and organisation of the working and learning spaces in the school to create a more professional environment.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and achievement data were evaluated. In

addition I looked at lesson observation records and analyses and evaluation of teaching standards. I reviewed a selection of students' mathematics books. We visited some lessons briefly.

## **Main findings**

Although progress was not rapid enough immediately following the inspection, you have now, with the local authority, created an action plan which thoroughly addresses all the areas identified for improvement. It is clear and helpful for governors and others to monitor the impact of actions on student performance. The plan shows a combination of practical actions with longer term training. However, it has weaknesses in not comparing current and projected achievement against national levels so any differences can be identified, or showing how parent views might be captured to check the success of the new reporting system.

The provision of personalised 'teaching files' means teachers now have records of the progress of students in their classes, although not all are using the information properly to plan lessons which challenge all students sufficiently. Teachers have benefited from training in questioning skills; lesson observations are monitoring the impact of better teaching on student outcomes well.

You have identified target groups of students who are making slow progress and have planned closely measured intervention to support their progress. This is already having a positive effect on student achievement; in many subjects, higher proportions of students are now making more than expected progress. Nevertheless, teachers are not monitoring carefully enough the progress of pupils in receipt of free school meals to ensure the gap between their achievement and that of pupils nationally closes.

You have undertaken some intensive work with subject leaders to ensure their assessment and prediction of student achievement is accurate. Your confidence that this is increasingly accurate was borne out by recent GCSE mathematics results in which 84 per cent of the students entered gained a C grade or higher and over two thirds made expected progress. This result was much closer to predictions and is now in line with national levels although the proportion making more than expected progress remains low.

Your work with teachers on improving their practice is beginning to have a positive impact. You have followed up training by regular visits to lessons and scrutiny of students' work. Your observations and those of the local authority during their learning review in January confirmed that more teaching is now good and less requires improvement. This is still not consistent, however. Students' mathematics books showed uneven marking and assessment with few opportunities provided for students to respond to teachers' advice for improvement when offered. The quality of student work and presentation varies too widely between groups.

The leadership team is new and, as a whole, lacks experience. Recent work has demonstrated a growing capacity to move the school forward. For example, the outcomes of the local authority teaching review and your own observations have supported a precise analysis of the quality of teaching and helped to define future support for teachers.

Although new leaders have undertaken useful training and visits to other schools, you have not yet defined precisely how their further development will be addressed. This is a barrier to developing a cohesive team.

The school environment does not reflect a drive towards the school becoming good. Classrooms and offices are untidy and disorganised and this does not model high standards or expectations well enough to students.

Governors have undertaken training to improve their knowledge and understanding of the school's progress data and are now able to offer better levels of challenge to the senior team. Governor meetings have been restructured to provide more opportunities for this to happen, for example, by checking the accuracy of the examination predictions made by the school. Overall, they are clearer about what needs to improve for the school to become good and visit more frequently to see for themselves whether standards are rising. Governors now hold more rigorous meetings with subject leaders to check students' progress.

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 knows the school well and is providing extensive support in a range of ways. Regular meetings have been held with the headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body to challenge the speed at which actions have been taken and to probe their impact on achievement. Valuable visits to other schools have been arranged by the local authority for senior leaders and teachers, so that best practice can be observed and learned from. A useful finance review has been undertaken and governor training provided.

The local authority carried out a learning review in January 2014. This found some improvement in the quality of teaching overall since the inspection. Some early impact of the school's work on literacy was also seen in some areas, although this was not consistent. A mathematics consultant has visited the school and provided training for teachers, however the local authority saw limited evidence of this training having changed teachers' practice during the learning review. Individual teachers have been offered specific training by the local authority and this has improved their teaching. A headteacher from a local school has been usefully deployed by the local authority as a 'critical friend' to the headteacher.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Diocese of Canterbury and the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Anwar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**