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Mrs Julie Rutherford
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rutherford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Durham Trinity School and Sports College, Durham

Following my visit to your school on 26 February 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 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:

- ensure the school's data and marking procedures are fit for purpose and that teachers use this information effectively so that lessons are well planned and pupils and students are given the widest range of opportunities to do well and reflect on their work and progress
- ensure that all middle leaders have the necessary skills so that they can play a robust and consistent part in monitoring teaching and learning
- speed up the implementation of the school-wide approach to reading
- ensure that all governors have regular opportunities to work closely with middle and senior leaders who are responsible for particular subjects and key stages

- provide regular information to parents about the progress that is being made towards becoming a good school.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and other senior and middle leaders, with a group of Year 7 and 8 pupils, a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken to tackle the school's weaknesses. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also visited classrooms on all three of the school's sites and spoke with pupils about their work.

Main findings

The school has moved swiftly to address the areas for improvement identified by the recent section 5 inspection. A detailed post inspection plan has been drawn up which identifies how the school will respond to the four improvement areas raised in the report. The plan is detailed, regularly updated and focuses on the impact that actions taken by the school are having on pupils' and students' learning. However, the plan needs to be more explicit about the roles that middle leaders play in improving the school and how the impact of their work will be monitored and evaluated. It also needs time scales to be more precisely set out to measure whether actions are on track.

Senior leaders have moved quickly to improve the way data is collected and used to monitor improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. This work is recent but there are signs of early gains being made. It is complemented by the school's implementation of a shared approach to marking and assessment. This is already apparent in pupils' work books where staff now identify clearly where pupils have done well and set out ways in which work can be improved. Pupils are responding positively to staff comments, evidence of correcting their work can be seen in books. Pupils report that they welcome this dialogue with the teachers because it helps them understand more clearly what is expected of them.

A new approach to literacy is giving students more opportunities to write at length and in a range of subjects. Pupils say that they enjoy writing and have welcomed the increased opportunities to show the quality of their work. The progress in reading is less certain. While school wide reading sessions have been introduced, with time set aside for reading each morning and afternoon, the recording and monitoring of students' progress is not fully implemented because the training of key staff has not been completed.

The review of the governing body has helped provide a more detailed focus for its work. The governing body's post inspection steering group meets regularly and is accurately assessing the impact of the school's actions. The governing body is also beginning to be more directly engaged with the work of the school but the pace of

this engagement needs to quicken. Governors need to move more urgently to develop links with subject and key stage leaders so that they can independently assess the impact of the school's actions.

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 is now providing senior leaders and governors with effective support, particularly in relation to literacy, the gathering and interpretation of data and the monitoring of pupils' progress. Existing links with The Oaks Secondary School, a local outstanding school, have been increased since the section 5 inspection. This school has provided effective training for Trinity staff in assessment and the tracking of progress and has offered guidance on effective ways of reporting pupil progress to governors.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector