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Mrs Michelle Bamber
Principal
Hassenbrook Academy
Hassenbrook Road
Stanford-le-Hope
SS17 0NS

Dear Mrs Bamber

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hassenbrook Academy

Following my visit to your school on 3 April 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 December 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:

- enable all students to respond to feedback from their teachers that makes clear how they can improve.
- ensure that all teachers plan engaging activities that help students make progress, so that attitudes to learning continue to improve.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other leaders and teachers, members of the governing body, students and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I made brief visits to a number of lessons and looked at the way teachers give students feedback about their work. I evaluated the academy's improvement plans and records of the checks on teaching and the impact of performance management.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders have established clear and ambitious priorities, based on a rigorous and regularly-updated evaluation of the academy's strengths and areas for improvement. Recent changes to the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are helping to bring about the changes that are needed. A number of developments to the curriculum mean that individuals, including the more able, now study courses that are better matched to their needs, interests and abilities. Systems to monitor the quality of teaching, marking and other areas of the school's work that were already in place at the time of the previous inspection have been extended further. Senior and subject leaders provide teachers with support to help them improve and meet their challenging targets, and act quickly and robustly where problems are identified. 'Lead practitioners' and others provide additional training for all teachers, who share their most effective techniques with their colleagues.

Teachers are starting to use data about the progress each student is making to plan engaging activities that will allow all to make the next steps in their learning, and identify those who need additional help or challenge. When marking, most teachers give regular and clear guidance about how they can improve their work. Students almost always respond, but sometimes the guidance they are given is not precise enough to help them learn from their mistakes. Additional help with reading, writing and mathematics for those students who need it is ensuring they develop the necessary skills to learn effectively in all subjects. The academy's monitoring data indicates that attitudes towards learning are increasingly positive; in all of the lessons visited during this inspection, students worked hard and contributed well. As a result of these improvements, teaching is increasingly effective, and students in all year groups are making more rapid progress than at the time of the previous inspection. Gaps identified in students' knowledge and understanding in key subjects are closing rapidly.

Attendance is improving; it is now broadly in line with the national average because leaders monitor absence very carefully and intervene quickly. Changes to the school's behaviour policy, together with improvements in teaching, have led to a sharp reduction in the incidence of poor behaviour within lessons. Attitudes to learning are less positive when activities are not engaging, or when students are working on tasks that are too easy, or too difficult, for them. The incidence of temporary exclusion increased, initially, as academy leaders made clear their expectations about behaviour. It has fallen considerably in recent months. The academy works very effectively with those at risk of permanent exclusion, so that they continue to achieve, and behave well upon reintegration to lessons.

Governors have altered the nature of their meetings in order to monitor standards, and progress towards the academy's improvement plans, closely and carefully. They supplement the detailed information they receive from senior and other leaders with visits to the academy. New members have augmented the range of skills on the

governing body. Governors continue to work effectively with the Principal to manage staff performance rigorously and eliminate any underperformance.

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 provided appropriate and effective support and training for senior leaders and governors, relating to leadership, management, and the use of data.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard
Her Majesty's Inspector