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Mrs Carolyn Dickinson
Headteacher
Worthing High School
South Farm Road
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West Sussex
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Dear Mrs Dickinson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Worthing High School

Following my visit to your school on 2 May 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 January 2014. 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:

- improve the presentation of information about students' progress so that governors and others can quickly see what has improved and what still requires attention.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with the school improvement advisor. The school action plan was evaluated and recent achievement data were reviewed. With you, I visited several classrooms and

talked to students and I observed student behaviour during break time. In addition, I scrutinised the school's single central record.

Context

Since the inspection, a Spanish teacher and a teacher of science have joined the school, along with two new behaviour support workers. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) took up her post in April 2014.

Main findings

Since the inspection you have swiftly adapted the school's improvement plan to address the key areas for improvement identified in the report. Relevant actions have been implemented with drive and rigour.

Following intensive training, teachers are now better able to use information about students' progress to track their improvements and offer support where needed. An effective new system of lesson planning has recently been implemented which links sharp analysis of students' individual needs to activities and learning in lessons. Lesson observations show that teachers are beginning to use this effectively although it has yet to become embedded across the school. Senior leaders now need to focus on presenting summary data about students' progress in a more concise way, with headlines which explain clearly what has improved and what still needs to get better.

Your strong focus on the engagement and achievement of boys has resulted in early signs of improvements in their learning attitudes in lessons. Consequently, boys in Year 11 are now making better-than-average levels of progress in English and in mathematics.

You have implemented good behaviour management training for all staff which has raised the degree of confidence in and responsibility for tackling any poor behaviour from students. Staff have a stronger presence in corridors and social spaces. They now record any inappropriate behaviour and it is followed up rigorously. Student behaviour in corridors and at break time is now much calmer and more sensible, and their engagement with learning in lessons is better. Innovative work on improving attendance is already bearing fruit: attendance for all students is now above the national level, and has improved particularly rapidly for boys. Detention and exclusion rates are beginning to fall.

You wisely commissioned an external review of standards in English. As a result, classes have been re-set and sharper analysis of those students requiring additional support is resulting in better targeted help. Robust predictions indicate a significant rise in achievement for Year 11 students this summer with more students than last year on track to make expected progress or better.

Subject leaders now have a pivotal role in leading subject reviews, and, following effective training, leading feedback to departments. Training for all staff is now better focused on their individual needs and is beginning to use the expertise of stronger staff. For example, teachers on the 'outstanding teaching' course delivered useful training to their colleagues. As a result, standards of teaching are improving and becoming more consistent. Teaching assistants have also benefited from good training: recently introduced observations of their work show much better support given to students in lessons.

Since the inspection, governors have increased the level of challenge and rigour in their work. Following increased training and more relevant action planning, meetings now include more acute scrutiny of progress data and better questioning. The Chair of Governing Body reflected that this had, in turn, improved the clarity of the information provided by the senior leaders, although there is still work to be done to sharpen this even more. Governors visit the school more regularly and now receive regular presentations from subject leaders, further strengthening their accountability.

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 school brokers the high quality services of an independent school improvement advisor. She performs regular school data reviews, holding the school and its leaders to account with rigour. The school continues to work within already established groups of partner schools but would benefit from extending links to outstanding schools and encouraging visits to these schools for teachers to develop better practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector