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Mr N Wallace
Stratford Upon Avon School
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CV37 9DH

Dear Mr Wallace

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stratford Upon Avon School

Following my visit to your school on 12 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 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 ensure:

- all teachers meet the learning needs of students through appropriate learning opportunities and feedback, particularly in chemistry
- effective marking and feedback, which improves students' knowledge, understanding and progress as seen in the majority of lessons, is used consistently by all teachers.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, other school leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You showed me around the school and visits were made to lessons in Year 8 English and modern foreign languages, Year 9 mathematics and Year 10 science. During these visits I looked at the work in students' books and spoke to them about their learning. Meetings were held with the subject leaders of English and mathematics, the special educational

needs coordinator and eight members of staff representing the English, science and technology departments and support staff. I also met with students from Years 10, 11 and 13. I evaluated the school's self-evaluation form and improvement plan. I looked at a range of documents, including the school's information about students' progress and attainment and the headteacher's report to governors.

Context

Since the inspection in December, one member of staff has left the school. There have been no other significant changes.

Main findings

The headteacher, school leaders and the governing body acted quickly to address the issues for improvement identified in the recent inspection. School leaders are taking appropriate and effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning and increase the rate of students' progress. Existing good practice within the school is shared more widely and extensive personalised training, including coaching, is provided for all staff. The monitoring of the quality of teaching has been refined since the inspection and now includes 'drop-ins' where school leaders, including subject leaders, check to see that the recently introduced 'non-negotiables', such as marking and feedback that supports students' learning, are consistently applied. As a consequence, information provided by the school shows that the number of good and outstanding lessons has increased since the inspection in December. Students said that teachers are better at meeting their individual needs in the majority of subjects. However, students stated that this was not always the case in chemistry.

The school marking policy has been revised and as a result teachers are better at letting students know precisely what to do to improve their work and students stated that this is helping them make progress. However, as a result of the work scrutiny and in discussions with students it was apparent that the quality of marking and feedback is inconsistent across subjects and individual teachers.

Since the inspection in December, school leaders have introduced a rigorous approach to checking students' progress. This includes the 'Known Knowns' approach which teachers use to carry out detailed analyses of students' performance against challenging targets. Teachers stated that they find this approach useful in ensuring that students' are on track to make the progress expected. As a result, information provided by the school shows that more students are making expected progress in English and mathematics than at the same time in 2013.

The school has carried out an external review of special educational needs provision, appointed a special educational needs coordinator and introduced a teaching assistant (TA) working party to look at the effective use of teaching assistants. As a result, teaching assistants are deployed more effectively and with greater

effectiveness. One student with special educational needs said, 'I am supported really well and the TA helps me think about my learning. I am now making better progress'.

Governors meet regularly to discuss the progress the school is making, fully support school leaders and sometimes challenge the judgements they make. They have, for example, questioned the progress of students who are in receipt of the pupil premium grant.

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

School leaders are working successfully with external consultants who provide advice and guidance for school improvement, inclusion and the development of senior and subject leaders. As a consequence, staff say there is greater rigour in the assessment of students' progress and that there is improved consistency in the application of policies and expectations.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Warwickshire, the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector