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13 May 2014

Mr Ian Young
Headteacher
Rainford High Technology College
Higher Lane
Rainford
St Helens
Merseyside
WA11 8NY

Dear Mr Young

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rainford High Technology College, St. Helens

Following my visit to your school on 12th 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 February 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:

- promote ways to engage students more actively as participants in the development of a strong aspirational and improvement culture.
- promote additional activities, such as debating, reading groups and subject specific student groups, to further stretch and challenge all students.
- review sixth form academic resources including class materials to ensure that students are supported, challenged and enabled to achieve to the highest levels.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Documents summarising other actions taken since the section 5 inspection were also scrutinised. A learning walk of the school was undertaken with the headteacher.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school's context since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

The headteacher and other senior leaders have produced a post inspection improvement plan that tackles the key recommendations arising from the February inspection. It is supported by a focused monitoring and evaluation schedule that charts actions taken and evaluates their impact.

The school's tracking and monitoring systems are now better focused on charting the progress made by students supported by the pupil premium and identifying where interventions are required to enable better student progress. Intervention to promote improvement is quicker and better focused. A stronger focus is developing to ensure that work in lessons meets the learning needs of all students. There is a clearer focus by senior leaders to ensure that the quality of teaching is high and consistent across all subjects. Professional development programmes for staff have focused on ways to develop greater independence in learning for students and to promote high expectations and ambitions for all students. Programmes are now in place to share the best practice in teaching and learning more effectively and in particular those that promote challenge for all students. I discussed with the headteacher the need to engage students more fully as participants in the development of an aspirational and improvement culture. I have also asked the school to consider how best to develop the Key Stage 3 curriculum so as to better enhance and embed student literacy, oracy and independent learning skills. Current student progress tracking data indicates that students supported by the pupil premium are doing better and that achievement gaps between them and their peers are narrowing. The management of the sixth form has been reorganised to provide greater focus on tracking and monitoring progress. I have asked the headteacher to review the challenge and expectations offered to sixth form students. In particular I have suggested to the school that they review study materials and study aids to ensure that they offer stretch and challenge to students so as to enable them to achieve to the highest level.

Governors have strengthened their understanding of student monitoring and tracking evidence and how well students are doing. They have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the progress that all students make.

External support

The local authority is committed to supporting the school in aiding its improvement planning and practice. I have suggested that work should be extended with best practice external partners so as to enhance the development and sustainability of an aspirational and improvement culture which challenges all students.

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

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority