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Ms D Fellowes
Lyndon School
Daylesford Road
Solihull
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Dear Ms Fellowes

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Lyndon School

Following my visit to your school on 7 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, senior leaders and the head of science. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. The inspector visited six different lessons to sample work, observe short teaching episodes and talk to pupils.

Context

Three science teachers have left the school since the previous inspection. A senior leader has been seconded to science to support the role of the subject leader.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

A number of actions by the local authority in providing support for the school have accelerated procedures already put in place by the governing body. Formal competency procedures have been instigated, and in some cases completed, with

underperforming teachers. Extensive training for science staff has been provided by a local Teaching School. Governors have approved substantial changes to the science curriculum taken by some current Year 11 students. Most parents and the students involved have accepted the potential benefits of this change. Although not mentioned in the previous inspection, the performance gap between boys and girls in science was much bigger than the national gap in 2013, and the school is investigating why. Changes to the information, advice and guidance to current Year 9 students are designed to better match, in the future, the science pathways to students' aptitude. Governors are aware that, although these curriculum changes might improve science achievement in the future, the primary cause of historic science underachievement has been shortfalls in teaching quality.

A range of regular monitoring by subject leaders, senior leaders and external partners are providing good information on students' progress. This allows governors to see how well the achievement of students is improving over time. There are clear performance milestones for English, mathematics and science set by the governing body in consultation with local authority senior advisers. The governing body is optimistic that teaching quality is better, achievement is rising, and that 2014 GCSE results will show that. However, continuing staff changes in science, and a science timetable that result in several teachers per science class, remain concerns. Students are quite vocal in sharing their anxiety about this situation. Vacancies in science remain unfilled. All avenues to help stabilise science staffing need exploring, including opportunities for temporary secondments brokered by the local authority.

In the lessons visited, some progress towards improving marking is evident. In the best of these examples, teachers insist that their good advice is followed and that corrections or additional tasks are completed by students. When activities captivate students' interest, and challenge them to extend their thinking, students work hard and enthusiastically. This is not yet consistent across all lessons, and, consequently, some students lose focus, leading to occasional distracting behaviour.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Solihull. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector