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Mr Andy Stainton
Headteacher
Cheshunt School
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Waltham Cross
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Dear Mr Stainton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cheshunt 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 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:

- ensure that all subject leaders challenge underperformance effectively so that the quality of teaching, and the rate of student progress, improves rapidly
- ensure that all students, in all subjects, complete work that helps them to take the next steps in their learning
- enable all students to respond to feedback that is precise about how they can improve their work further and present it more appropriately
- ensure revisions to teaching and assessment arrangements help students in Years 7 to 10 to make accelerated progress in mathematics.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plans, made brief visits to a number of lessons and examined documents relating to the outcomes of monitoring activities and the impact of performance management.

Context

New subject leaders in mathematics and design and technology have been appointed.

Main findings

Most students, including those in the sixth form, are making more rapid progress overall than at the time of the previous inspection. The gap in attainment between boys and girls, evident in 2013, has narrowed substantially. Recent alterations to teaching in mathematics have helped Year 11 students to make rapid progress. Their attainment is now at least in line with age-related expectations. The newly-appointed subject leader is carrying out a review of provision in mathematics for other year groups.

You and your senior leaders have established ambitious and appropriate priorities, based on a rigorous evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Your colleagues understand their roles and responsibilities in driving forward improvement because plans and policies make expectations clear. The most effective subject leaders support senior leaders in monitoring how far these expectations are being met. All provide teachers with support to help them meet their demanding targets; some do not offer effective challenge when standards are too low. This means the quality of teaching is improving more quickly in some subject areas than in others.

Most teachers use their information about what students know and can do to plan engaging activities that help them to take the next steps in their learning. Students make slower progress when activities are less interesting, or when completing work that is too easy or too hard for them. Leaders and teachers regularly monitor individuals' progress, and provide well-targeted and effective additional support, or challenge, for those who need it. Teachers are helping to improve students' understanding of the demands different types of examination questions place upon them, and of the most effective ways to meet them.

Existing systems to monitor the quality of teaching, marking and other areas of the school's work have been developed since the previous inspection; the quality of marking has improved. Some teachers do not make sufficiently clear how students can improve their work further, and students do not always respond to the feedback they receive. A recently-introduced policy gives clear guidance about how work

should be presented; standards are improving but some students have yet to make the necessary changes.

Governors have further developed their understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement gained through their regular, and focused, visits to the school. They ask searching questions about how well different groups of students are doing, and the extent of progress towards the school's improvement plan targets.

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

Local authority advisers have provided a variety of sources of support for individual teachers that have helped them to improve, and have facilitated links with other schools so teachers and leaders can learn from effective practice elsewhere. Reviews of the quality of teaching and other aspects of the school's work have helped to inform, and validate, the school's own judgements.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard
Her Majesty's Inspector