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Ms Kathleen Higgins
Headteacher
Beechwood School
Long Readings Lane
Slough
Berkshire
SL2 1QE

Dear Ms Kathleen Higgins

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Beechwood School

Following my visit to your school on 9 June 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:

- ensure greater consistency in the way mathematics teachers use information about students' achievement
- make sure all middle leaders are consistent in the way that they use information about students' progress to challenge and support the teams they manage.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, your senior leaders, the Chair of Governors, and a representative from the local authority. We visited mathematics lessons and sixth form lessons. I evaluated your action plans.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been no significant changes in context.

Main findings

You are determined to make long-lasting improvements to the school. You have totally accepted the findings of the previous inspection. With these findings in mind, you have carefully reviewed the roles of your staff. As a result you have sensibly created new senior and middle leader roles. The middle leader roles are rightly focused on supporting students who benefit from additional 'pupil premium' funding. You have high expectations of your leaders. You expect them to demonstrate that they are making an important contribution to raising the achievement of all students.

The actions in your plans are focused on the areas for improvement from the last inspection report. You have clearly expressed the outcomes of these planned actions in terms of the difference that they will make to students' achievement. You have sensibly created separate plans that concentrate on raising achievement in the sixth form and in mathematics and other areas. You are regularly checking the progress of these plans and have helpfully included the results of your monitoring. There is detail given in all the plans as to how you will improve the achievement of the most able students.

The Chair of Governors is committed to improving the school. Governors have swiftly acted upon the findings of the governing body review. They have received training to develop their understanding of the school's information on student achievement. They are asking sharper questions and are clearer about what the school has yet to improve to become good. Governors have worked closely with you to seek solutions to the school's difficulty in recruiting new staff. They have supported you in ensuring that procedures for managing the targets set for staff performance are robustly implemented.

You know that there are some inconsistencies in the way your middle leaders use information on students' progress to challenge their teams to do better. You sensibly have tailor-made plans in place for middle leaders to receive training from external partners. You have also thought more carefully when matching up middle leaders with the senior leaders who manage them. This has resulted in some recent changes. Senior leaders are making better use of information on students' progress to hold middle leaders to account. It will be important to check whether these changes lead to greater consistency in the achievement of different 'pupil groups'.

In mathematics there is a greater proportion of teaching that requires improvement. Although some teachers are planning work to meet the needs of students with

different abilities, this practice is not consistent. You have made sure that while you tackle this, students receive the extra help they need to prepare them for their examinations.

You have appointed a new 'director of studies' for the sixth form to challenge and support subject teachers in their efforts to improve progress. You are using information on the progress sixth form students are making to hold subject leaders to account. Form tutors are making better use of this information to set targets with sixth form students and provide highly personalised plans for meeting these 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

The local authority representative visits the school regularly and consequently has a very clear understanding of what the school needs to do in order to become good. These visits have focused on discussing how best to resolve staffing and recruitment issues. The local authority is currently developing the quality of their training in this area. Once their training for middle leaders is finalised, they have agreed that the school will have the opportunity to access it.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Slough and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector