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17 July 2104

Mr Richard Cowper  
Acting Principal  
Ifield Community College  
Crawley Avenue  
Crawley  
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Dear Mr Cowper

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ifield Community College**

Following my visit to your school on 16 July 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 second 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 governors make full use of information provided to accurately evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses
- make sure that governors challenge the school to improve students' achievement and narrow the gap in the achievement of different groups of students
- ensure that when teachers plan lessons they use information on students' progress to match tasks more carefully to the needs of individuals, especially the most able students
- train all leaders to make better use of information on students' progress when judging the quality of teaching.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you and your senior leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors and a representative from the local authority. I made short visits to classrooms in English, mathematics and science and scrutinised your revised improvement plan and other documents relating to self-evaluation.

## **Context**

The current acting principal will become the substantive vice principal when the new principal joins the school in September 2014.

## **Main findings**

You have made appropriate improvements to your action plan. It now clearly describes the intended impact that planned changes will have on students. The plan records the checks you are making. It also provides a detailed evaluation of how effectively the school is meeting its milestones for improvement. However, this evaluation is not always accurate because you and your leaders are not comparing the students' achievement with national averages. The governors' role in monitoring the plan is not identified in enough detail throughout the different sections.

The governing body is effectively supporting the school's efforts to improve behaviour by formally interviewing students whose conduct is not improving. Plans are in place to extend the governors' involvement in the school by, for example, attaching a governor to each year group. These are positive steps. However, governors are not currently involved enough in evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is a key recommendation arising from the recent review of governance. The governing body is not challenging the school to improve students' achievement with sufficient rigour. Governors have not placed enough attention on questioning how effectively the school is narrowing the gaps between the achievement of different groups of students, especially boys.

Teachers are making better use of information about students' progress to identify those who need extra help to catch up. They are also using it to design seating arrangements in their classrooms so students are grouped appropriately. In some classes visited teachers are using the information to ensure their questions are better targeted to meet the needs of individual students. However, teachers are not consistently using information on students' progress to plan tasks that are closely matched to students' abilities or extend the most able students. In a minority of classes visited their needs were not being well enough met.

Senior leaders are improving the way they use information from tracking to hold subject leaders to account for students' progress in their subject areas. However this

is not yet consistently rigorous. The school's own predictions indicate that the progress students make from Year 7 to 11 in English and mathematics will decline this year. Leaders are not always giving enough importance to the progress students are making when they judge the quality of teaching.

Students are behaving better in class. Most students seen on the visit showed a high level of respect towards their teachers and fellow students. Students are more compliant than they previously were when teachers remind them of behaviour guidelines. Where the teaching is weaker some students become less engaged but they do not prevent others from learning. Teachers' marking is becoming more regular and their comments are mostly detailed. However in science this practice is less consistent. Teachers in English, mathematics and science do not always insist that students remedy the poor presentation found in some books.

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 has wisely brokered visits for, English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages teachers to a wide range of local schools. It has rightly focused training and support on the modern foreign languages department. The local authority has agreed to link the governing body to an effective governing body in a secondary school with a similar context. The authority is aware that it now needs to support and guide the school's leaders in making better use of information on students' progress when judging the quality of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex.

Yours sincerely

**Sarah Hubbard**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**