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Mrs A Andersen  
Headteacher  
Hodge Hill College  
Bromford Road  
Hodge Hill  
Birmingham  
B36 8HB

Dear Mrs Andersen

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hodge Hill College**

Following my visit to your school on 19 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 April 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.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the head teacher, other senior leaders, the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was also evaluated. The inspector visited several classrooms for a short period, spoke informally to students and staff, looked at samples of students' work and evaluated recent student examination results.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection the Governing Body has been reconstituted, with a new Chair of Governors. A supportive partnership with Aston Manor Academy has been established.

## **Main findings**

The determined leadership of the head teacher and her encouragement of high expectations are bearing fruit in better teaching and higher progress for all groups of pupils. At the heart of these improvements are changes to the organisation of senior leadership, a new faculty structure, good professional development training, and the consistent application of firm performance management processes. Some still challenges remain, particularly for mathematics to establish a full complement of specialist mathematics teachers. Over the past year, rapid and sustained improvements in the quality of teaching have led to a jump up in academic standards. English GCSE results in 2014 improved substantially compared with 2013. Mathematics results did not enjoy such a strong gain. Even so, the proportion of students gaining at least five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics, at 50%, is much higher than in 2013 (41%). All groups of students did better, including those in receipt of the Pupil Premium. A recent external review of the impact of the Pupil Premium has validated the effective use of resources.

School governors are supporting the head teacher's systematic refurbishment of the long-neglected school buildings. They have a firm grip on finance, understand the schools strengths, the potential of its students and staff, and set ambitious targets designed to maximise the opportunities for students to succeed when they leave the school. They have directed the curriculum towards a predominantly academic range of subjects.

Already the clustering of faculties into the same location on site, modern toilet facilities in one block, and high quality display of students' work in corridors is creating a more positive learning ethos. School records show a marked reduction in 'late to lesson' events, and reducing (to below national levels) the number of fixed term exclusions. Attendance remains high. Around the school, most students walk considerately, although a few still run rather than walk despite a high staff presence. At this visit, no litter was evident after lunchtime, and the absence of seagulls and other scavengers waiting for scraps suggests this problem has been solved.

In all of the lessons visited, students respected teacher instruction and cooperated well with each other as lessons progressed. The more challenging and interesting their task, the better they warmed to it, devoting their full attention and engaging in lively discussion with their peers and the teacher. When the task was more mundane, however, some students choose to chatter to neighbours, leading to a rise in background noise that suggests their concentration has wandered off task. In their books there is consistent application of new marking policy, with variable quality

teacher feedback. In the main, students are trying to respond to that feedback but some comments are too general to make that straightforward. For example, 'improve your handwriting' is difficult to do in a 10 minute 'act upon the advice' slot at the start of a lesson.

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 appointment of the new head teacher a year ago started the process of improvement. The local authority retains full confidence in the head teacher's leadership and has allowed her to get on with the job. Support for re-constituting the governing body, and brokering the link to Aston Manor Academy have been helpful. That link successfully exploits the Academy's expertise in raising literacy standards, particularly for students arriving from feeder primary schools with low reading ages. There is no need for additional support, although recruiting permanent mathematics specialist teachers remains a local area challenge that is not unique to this school.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**