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Ms Ruth Williamson
Headteacher
Foxford School and Community Arts College
Grange Road
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Coventry
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Dear Ms Williamson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Foxford School and Community Arts College

Following my visit to your school on 13 October 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 July 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection in September 2012 the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- speed up the rate of progress of students in mathematics in Years 7, 8 and 9, in French throughout the school and at AS level in biology, information and communication technology (ICT), economics, history, sociology and theatre studies
- ensure teachers consistently use and apply the school's assessment and marking policy

- reduce the number of incidents of low level disruption in Years 8 and 9.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you and the senior leadership team to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Meetings were held with three members of the governing body including the Chair of Governors and a representative of the local authority. I also met with the subject leaders of English, modern foreign languages and the sixth form leader. You showed me around the school and we visited classes in Years 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13 to see the students at work in English, design technology, French, sociology and science. I analysed students' learning through an examination of their books. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's improvement action plans, information about pupils' progress and behaviour and the school's self-evaluation document.

Context

Since the inspection in July 2014, ten members of staff have left the school and eleven have joined including an assistant headteacher.

Main findings

The headteacher, school leaders and the governing body, with the support of the local authority, acted quickly to address the issues for improvement identified in the recent inspection. School leaders have prioritised improving how they monitor and evaluate the work of the school and taken effective and appropriate action to challenge teachers when students' learning is inadequate. Expectations of what is expected of staff are clear and frequently reinforced.

Since the inspection in July, aspirational learning targets have been set for all students. Teachers' performance, including through the appraisal process, is measured against these targets. As a consequence, the progress and attainment of the majority of students is improving in a range of subjects. However, the latest information provided by the school shows that students in Key Stage 3 do not make the progress expected of them in mathematics. In addition, students do not make the progress expected in French throughout the school and at AS level in biology, information and communication technology, economics, history, sociology and theatre studies.

The school's marking policy has been revised and as a result teachers are better at telling students how to improve their work. Students stated that this is helping them make progress and there is evidence that students are acting upon the advice provided. This is particularly the case when students are given opportunities to reflect on, and improve, their work during lesson time. However, as a result of the work scrutiny it is apparent that the quality of marking is inconsistent.

School leaders have introduced a commercial reading scheme that is used with students in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10. This scheme was initially trialled with students in Year 10. Information provided by the school shows that an increased number of students are reading for pleasure and that the reading ages of students in Year 10 has increased by, on average, seven months in two terms. The book scrutiny showed that students' across the school are making expected progress in their writing skills.

The school homework policy has been revised and a new homework timetable has been produced for students in all year groups. Students stated that they get regular homework which helps their learning and that this work is always marked. School leaders frequently check the work in students' books and quickly challenge any teachers not setting regular homework.

The visits to lessons during the monitoring inspection visit showed that the majority of students' demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, information provided by the school shows that, in Years 8 and 9, a significant minority of students fail to meet the school's behaviour expectations.

Governors meet regularly to discuss the progress the school is making and continue to have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

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 provides appropriate support for the school. They do this through School Improvement Board meetings and school review days.

School leaders are working successfully with external consultants who provide advice and guidance for school improvement, inclusion and curriculum development. As a consequence, the progress and attainment of the majority of students is improving in a range of subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector