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David Jeapes
Headteacher
Mayfield School
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Dear Mr Jeapes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mayfield School

Following my visit to your school on 17 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.

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:

- increase the focus on improving marking and feedback so that all pupils are clear about how to make better progress
- extend monitoring of pupil progress rapidly to track all year groups, not just Year 11
- sharpen the school action plan so that actions are clearly prioritised and their impact can be monitored easily by governors.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. With senior leaders, I visited a range of classrooms, talked to students and looked at their work. In addition I scrutinised a range of students' books.

Context

Since the inspection, two teachers have left the school, and five new teachers have joined. In September, the school admitted its first cohort of Reception Year pupils. An additional leader has been seconded to the senior team.

Main findings

Following the inspection, the summer GCSE results were much lower than you expected. Your analysis of this data led to swift action in a number of areas. You have begun appropriate work with teachers to help them assess work better and make more accurate predictions about students' achievement. In addition, you have introduced more frequent formal assessment opportunities. Some of the students' work will now be checked by external markers. Several teachers have attended examination board training, and you have brokered the support of an external consultant for mathematics. These initiatives are very recent and have yet to show an impact on standards. In mathematics, you have introduced some single-sex classes for Year 11. You report that the boys are already showing an improved engagement with their work; this has yet to raise their levels of achievement.

Sensibly you have delivered robust staff training on improving the way in which teachers match work accurately to students' ability. On our visits to classrooms I saw that this was beginning to happen, although some students still commented that work was too easy. Your increased focus on marking and feedback is beginning to bear fruit, although as you know this remains far from consistent.

You have increased the amount of time given to departments to work on improving learning and teaching. This has enabled leaders to share good practice more effectively, driving forward your high expectations. It was pleasing to hear that you have a middle leadership development programme ready to deliver in the coming weeks. Middle leaders report that recent work on introducing a whole school lesson planning system has been a useful process; they feel confident that it will lead to greater consistency. These leaders show an increasing understanding of the need to hold their teams to account and they are using the school's information and tracking systems more effectively. Currently most attention is given to checking the progress

of Year 11 students, however this sharp focus is not yet extended to all year groups. It is too early to say what impact this work will have on achievement. You have recently introduced well thought-out initiatives to develop better mathematical and writing skills across the school. During our visits to classrooms, it was good to see these in action, supporting, for example, students' time-telling skills in an English lesson.

The strong governing body continues to challenge the school in a robust and well-informed manner. A new scrutiny committee has been formed specifically to track the school's progress towards becoming good. Governors are relentless in their insistence on evidence of the impact of the school's work. They rightly note that the action plan is not yet sufficiently robust and does not identify priorities clearly enough.

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 brokered the support of Horndean School and the headteacher recently visited Mayfield as part of a local authority two-day review. The education officer carried out a detailed review of the school this term and identified recommendations for improvement. Future visits are yet to be arranged.

You have wisely sought out support from three other local schools (Miltoncross Academy, Portsmouth Grammar and Charter Academy). Useful visits by you and other staff to these schools have already begun and more will follow.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector