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10 November 2014

Mr Richard Jacobs  
Headteacher  
The Chase  
Geraldine Road  
Malvern  
Worcestershire  
WR14 3NZ

Dear Mr Jacobs

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Chase**

Following my visit to your school on 7 November 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 second 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:

- Raise achievement in mathematics, particularly for disadvantaged students, through:
  - planning work which avoids unnecessary repetition so that students can move on to more challenging work which will encourage them to think deeper about each topic
  - improving assessment in mathematics using a greater range of activities such as problem solving or investigations rather than relying on an end of key stage test.

- Providing governors with the information they need to hold leaders to account for the gaps in attainment and progress of disadvantaged students in all year groups.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the Governing Body, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The amended school development plan, which includes the post-Ofsted improvement plan, was evaluated. A tour of the school was carried out with a focus on safety and wellbeing of students. Year 9 students' work in English and mathematics were reviewed jointly with leaders of these subjects. Documents related to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, achievements of students and the minutes of meetings of the Governing Body were also checked.

## **Main findings**

The initial slow reaction to addressing the areas for improvement following the most recent section 5 inspection has now gained pace.

There has been a marked improvement in overall attainment and the progress being made by students in English and mathematics based on provisional 2014 performance information at GCSE. However, gaps in attainment and progress for groups of students, including disadvantaged students, have continued to widen overall compared with others in the school, and with other students nationally. This is because the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students in mathematics continues to be much lower than others in the school. Disadvantaged students in English are making much better progress than in previous years and gaps in attainment and progress have narrowed considerably.

Information provided by school leaders on the attainment and progress of students who are currently in Year 11 shows that gaps for disadvantaged students in English are narrowing further, while in mathematics gaps remain wide. Actions taken by senior leaders to raise attainment and improve progress of disadvantaged students in mathematics are not yet having sufficient impact.

The work scrutiny undertaken jointly with leaders of English demonstrated the effectiveness of their monitoring through regular checks to make sure that assessments are accurate. Teachers use this information well to support students who need extra help or further challenge, and students act upon this detailed feedback to improve their learning.

In mathematics, although teachers are following the school policy on marking, the progress made by some students is slowed because their learning is not being moved on quickly enough. Work seen in students' books showed too much repetition of work at the same level and not enough opportunities to solve problems or to do

mathematical investigations throughout their work. Further work is needed to improve assessment at Key Stage 3 so that leaders of mathematics become more confident that work is assessed correctly to avoid having to use old test papers to arrive at a level. Subject leaders have introduced a new scheme of work for students in Year 9 which will prepare them well for the new GCSE examination.

School leaders have been successful in improving attendance, including that of disadvantaged students. Pastoral leaders and form tutors now receive regular weekly updates on attendance and this helps them to quickly intervene where there are concerns, and to work closer with families on improving attendance. The number of exclusions continues to be low and are only used in the most extreme cases.

Following a recent serious incident in school, leaders and governors have worked with the local authority to review actions to take in the event of a critical incident. Their findings have led to improvements being made to the way in which the school communicates with parents. Students at the school are kept safe. There are a large number of staff who are qualified first-aiders and there is always someone to care for a student if they are sick or injured during the school day.

Governors do not have enough information which will enable them to identify if the gap in attainment and progress of disadvantaged students, including those in the sixth form, is narrowing. They receive some information for students currently in Year 11, but do not know if pupil premium funding is making a difference to the gap within school for other year groups. The amended school development plan is now a more useful document to check on the progress being made with key actions.

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**

School leaders have recently put together a support plan in agreement with a partner school to raise attainment of disadvantaged students. The recommended review of pupil premium spending is taking place this term to evaluate the difference being made by this funding to disadvantaged students. The possibility of extending this support programme to include specific support for mathematics will be explored.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire, the Education Funding Agency and the DfE Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**