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5 December 2014

Mr Edward Fitzpatrick
Headteacher
Stanley High School Sports College
Fleetwood Road
Southport
Merseyside
PR9 9TF

Dear Mr Fitzpatrick

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stanley High School Sports College, Sefton

Following my visit to your school on 4 December 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 September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection, and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- improve the school development plan and its impact by ensuring that:
 - priorities match those identified in the previous inspection report
 - proposed actions are clear and specific
 - that the milestones are dated and include clear detailed expectations of what will have been achieved
 - the person responsible for leading an action is not also monitoring the success of the action.
- evaluate the effectiveness of current professional development programmes to improve teaching, learning and assessment.

- strengthen the student voice so all are aware of the roles and responsibilities of their student council representatives and how to engage with them, and provide feedback on actions taken as a result of the student voice.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, students, the chair and a member of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, and the school improvement partner to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and self-evaluation document were evaluated.

Main findings

Since the last inspection senior leaders have broadened their evidence base for making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning to include learning walks, book scrutiny and student voice. A strategy for professional development is in place that involves teachers working in triads and quartets to observe and comment on each other's teaching. Although a great deal of qualitative and quantitative data has been collected from these initiatives, the school were unable to offer any evidence that the strategies were helping teachers to meet the areas for improvement in teaching, marking and assessment identified in the last inspection report. Also none of the students I met could identify any improvements in the way they were being taught or in how they received feedback on their work.

Improvement planning is not fit for purpose. The plan does not indicate whether any success criteria have been met since strategies were put in place or what still needs to be done. The plan does not prioritise actions sufficiently well and fails to address all of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report, including a recommendation to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all groups in the school. I strongly suggest that action plans be reviewed in the light of the recommendations at the top of this letter.

Students describe the school as welcoming and friendly. They said that bullying was rare and they felt safe in school. However, they were unsure who students should go to if they wished to discuss or disclose a problem and they were unaware of helpline numbers such as for Childline as these were neither in their planners nor displayed prominently around the school.

Overall, school leaders have not tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection with sufficient rigour and the actions taken have not had the impact that is required to move the school forward.

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

Since the last inspection a representative from the local authority has met with senior leaders, literacy and English leaders to discuss matters arising from the inspection and arrange future support. The school has brokered and funded support from a school improvement partner and a mathematics consultant and some teachers in the Modern Foreign Languages department plan to visit a local school to observe good practice. It is too early to judge the impact of these initiatives.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector