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4 December 2014

Mr Kevin Flanagan  
Headteacher  
Pensby High School for Boys: A Specialist Sports College  
Irby Road  
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CH61 6XN

Dear Mr Flanagan

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pensby High School for Boys: A Specialist Sports College, Wirral**

Following my visit to your school on 3 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 October 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:

- strengthen the student voice and ensure students receive feedback on actions taken as a result of voicing their opinions
- broaden opportunities for teachers to learn from observing good and outstanding practice within their own school and beyond
- continue to develop the role of middle leaders so they are fully accountable for the monitoring, evaluation and improvements in teaching and learning in their departments
- further develop teachers' understanding of inclusion in relation to meeting the specific needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable students and those with disabilities or special educational needs.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, a group of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection the local authority has agreed a consultation process regarding the proposed merger with Pensby High School for Girls.

## **Main findings**

The results of the summer GCSE examinations fell below expectations, which was a disappointment for the school. Nevertheless morale is high and recent improvements to teaching and learning are evident.

The school development plan has been written to meet the needs of both schools in the federation and with the full merger in mind. It includes clear strengths and areas for development which match, and go beyond, those identified in the last inspection report. Proposed actions accord with the identified areas for improvement and the plan makes clear timelines, key personnel, resource implications, success criteria and how actions will be monitored by third parties.

The Governing Body, local authority and students are all of the view that the new headteacher has brought rigour and urgency to the task of improving the school and the outcomes for students. An extensive programme of professional development that is focussed on improving teaching and learning is fully underway and bespoke to meet teachers' needs. A significant impact of this training has been an improvement in the marking of books and the quality of feedback to students.

The students spoken to, including those in the sixth form, were of the opinion that much had changed for the better since September. They said that their teachers had higher expectations of them and that they now had a much clearer understanding of the progress they were making and what they needed to do to improve.

Those in Year 11 found the new period six very helpful as it gave them an opportunity to catch up if they had fallen behind and to get extra support if they needed it. All said that they were now expected to work harder and were given more homework although this was not evenly distributed, leading to them being overburdened in some weeks and with little to do in others. The words that the students used most often to describe the school were 'improving', 'developing' and 'growing', and they said that for the most part, their lessons were not disrupted by the poor behaviour of others. Although they agreed that the student voice had improved a little it was not strong and none had received feedback on their comments.

As a result of the review of governance, the Governing Body are now in a better position to hold the school to account and support leaders in reviewing the success of its action planning.

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 effective support from three local schools, two of which are teaching schools. This includes support from subject leaders of education for mathematics and science, a training programme for newly qualified and recently qualified teachers, support for the business manager, and a review of governance from a national leader of governance. Plans are in place to use local schools more in the future to enable middle leaders and teachers to observe good practice in their subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

**Her Majesty's Inspector**