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Helen Freeman
Headteacher
Lubavitch House School (Senior Girls)
107-115 Stamford Hill
London
N16 5RP

Dear Mrs Freeman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lubavitch House School (Senior Girls)

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 2015 with Gaynor Roberts HMI, 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The school was judged to have not taken effective action at the time of its first monitoring inspection in November 2013.

Senior leaders and governors are now taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the section 5 and monitoring inspections. The school should take further action to:

- plan a broader range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences including the more active promotion of British values
- speed up the implementation of the findings of the external review of governance from November 2013
- widen and deepen the preparation of the girls for their lives, especially their working lives, after Lubavitch.

Evidence

During the visit, inspectors met with you, your assistant headteacher, two governors, including the Chair, a representative of the local authority and four middle leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You and your assistant headteacher accompanied inspectors on short tours of the school during which we made brief visits to lessons. Inspectors spoke with groups of students and examined samples of their work. I evaluated the school's internal performance information, minutes of governing body meetings, and the school's action plan.

Context

Since the last inspection, three teachers have left the school. An assistant headteacher, who is also head of the science department, a new head of the English department and a new science laboratory technician have joined the school.

Main findings

Significant progress has been made in this school since the last monitoring visit. This is the result of more effective leadership at all levels. The appointment of several key new leaders is crucial in this regard. Standards in English and science are now rising to match the levels in mathematics following the appointment of two very promising middle leaders. The technical competence of all leaders is now at a much more advanced level.

Senior leaders are more accurate in their assessment of what needs to be done. The revised, streamlined single action plan is much improved and better able to evidence the progress of the school. The interim steps within the plan enable efficient, accurate checks on the school's progress. Lines of accountability, shared amongst all leaders, including the new middle and senior leaders, are clear and appropriate. However, it is notable that governors are not mentioned in the plan beyond their own specific improvement targets. It is vital that governors, along with school leaders, monitor the plan closely and are seen to be so doing.

Time has been wisely spent creating, embedding and now monitoring basic systems and processes. Leaders regularly monitor and evaluate: the implementation of the new marking code, the new classroom routines, students' academic performance via a much improved data system, and the quality, range and diversity of staff training. There is still more to be done to ensure consistent application, by all staff, of those systems but progress here is undoubted.

Students with special educational needs and disabilities are looked after far better. The new special educational needs co-ordinator ('SENCO') is clear on providing an improved education for these young people and has set about doing so very quickly. The newly revised, more accurate, special educational needs register, meaningful

provision plans and effective staff training for teaching assistants are all clear measures of improved strength and emerging depth in this area. The plans for the new SENCO to gain her mandatory special educational needs qualification should be actioned as quickly as possible. The skilled support and challenge of the governor with responsibility for the monitoring of special educational needs is of great value to the SENCO.

Students have noticed changes for the better in their school. They consistently state that marking is now much better. Where this works best, students describe green pen comments which are incisive, diagnostic and provide clear next steps. Students are given time to digest such comments, and their purple responses are marked well. However, this is not consistently applied by all teaching staff. In some books examined by inspectors teachers' comments were at best sparse and, at worst, missing altogether. Leaders need to act quickly to remedy this inconsistency.

Students also praised other improvements in the school. For example, they are enjoying the much more skilled teaching in English. It is clear from their English books and conversations with inspectors that they are challenged to study a wide range of demanding topics and literature. Students are very proud of their faith and cultural heritage and it is clear from strong bible studies teaching that there is a deep-rooted intellectual appreciation of their religion. However, students are less knowledgeable and confident when discussing other faiths, cultures and the world of work – in Britain or elsewhere. Replicating the intellectual strength at the heart of bible studies in the study and appreciation of other faiths, cultures and the diversity of the working world is required.

Governors are providing better support and challenge to the school and have responded positively to the findings of the external review. However, the exact relationship of the federated board with the school requires resolution quickly. Equally, developing the skills and expertise of all governors and improving the administration of the federated board and the school's sub-committee is required so that the momentum of improvement is enhanced.

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 school's strong partnership with the local authority has pertained. The school's use of part time consultants and a highly skilled school improvement adviser has had a clear impact on improving standards in the school. The local authority's most recent assessment of the school's development provides clear advice for further improvement.

Similarly, the school is casting its 'support and challenge net' further afield to complement its own evaluation of improvement. However, this does not yet apply to the effectiveness of governance which to date has been over-reliant on the advice of the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Debbie Clinton
Her Majesty's Inspector