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

Dear Mr Fitzpatrick

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

Following my visit to your school on 10 March 2015, 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 September 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 implementation of actions to ensure improvements are rapid and sustained.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, students, members of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and the school's mathematics consultant to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement action plans were evaluated.

Context

Three governors have resigned from the Governing Body and three new governors have joined.

Main findings

Since the last monitoring visit senior leaders and governors have taken decisive action to address the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 report and the further recommendations for improvement following the first monitoring inspection. The headteacher has drawn on a range of support and advice to ensure the updated development plan prioritises actions appropriately and is fit for purpose. The school has also produced a separate action plan for mathematics to drive rapid improvement in this area.

The collection, analysis and use data is much improved. As a result, senior leaders are better able to hold middle leaders to account for the performance of their teams. Plans are in place to create a teaching and learning team to lead on developing effective pedagogies across the school and improve consistency.

Faculty, pastoral and curriculum reviews are underway to better meet the needs of the students. Consultation with students will inform some of these decisions. However, there is still much to be done to develop the role of the student council and improve feedback to students on the impact of consultation.

Raised expectations, higher order questioning, and improved marking and feedback are key areas for teachers' professional development. Evidence that this is having a positive impact on teaching and learning came from the students who reported that lessons are now 'more interesting,' with 'more practical activities and groupwork' and 'less copying out of books'; lessons were 'more structured' and 'more disciplined'; 'teachers expect more', homework is 'more frequent and challenging' and marking helps them 'understand how to make progress'.

The appointment of three skilled and experienced governors has strengthened the capacity of the Governing Body to support and rigorously challenge the school.

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

In the past three months the school has drawn extensively on external support to move the school forward. This includes: senior leaders' attendance at Ofsted's 'Getting to Good' seminars; HMI surgeries; a book scrutiny by a local authority school improvement partner; support visits from leaders of local schools; a two day visit and report on findings from a national leader in education (NLE); consultancy for the mathematics department; continued local authority support for the English department; and a visit by teachers in the modern foreign languages department to a local school to observe good practice. Following a recommendation in the NLE report the local authority has brokered a review of the school's use and impact of its pupil premium fund.

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