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8 May 2015

Ms Tanya White
Headteacher
Furze Platt Senior School
Furze Platt Road
Maidenhead
SL6 7NQ

Dear Ms White

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Furze Platt Senior School

Following my visit to your academy on 8 May 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2015. 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 academy should take further action to:

- ensure students use the feedback they are given by teachers effectively to improve their work.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, a group of middle leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated a range of documentation including the academy action plan, information relating to the monitoring of teaching and information about students' progress. You took me on a tour of the academy and we made brief visits to a number of classes where I spoke to students about their work and looked at their books.

Main findings

You have acted with determination and focus to tackle the areas for improvement. You have swiftly updated the academy's improvement plan to show how these priorities will be addressed, who will monitor progress and how and when it will be measured. You have set clear and ambitious targets for students' progress this year. As a result, staff and governors have a good understanding of what needs to be done and how improvements are going to be made.

You have undertaken the required pupil premium funding (additional government funding) review. You have taken effective action to address the recommendations. Senior leaders have increased the support given to disadvantaged students for English and mathematics, for example with additional revision opportunities and more one to one support. In order to raise aspirations, all disadvantaged students in years 9, 10 and 11 have received individual careers interviews as a matter of priority. Current assessment information shows disadvantaged students in Year 11 are making better progress and are catching up with their classmates.

Senior leaders have improved the systems for collecting and analysing assessment information so that it is collected more frequently during the year. As a result, students who are in danger of underachieving are identified and given appropriate support more quickly. Middle leaders are reporting more formally to senior leaders about how their departments are tackling this underachievement. This is making teachers more accountable for the progress their students make.

Senior leaders have worked with the special educational needs coordinator effectively to review the help given to students to improve their reading skills. Support is now rightly targeted more closely to the students who most need it and more time has been made available for teaching assistants to give valuable help to students.

Work in students' books shows they are receiving more frequent and detailed feedback from their teachers. However, there is inconsistency about how well students respond to these comments to improve their work.

Work continues on the construction of the new gym. Senior leaders have worked effectively with contractors to ensure students are kept at a safe distance from the building site. Senior leaders meet weekly with the contractors to ensure that appropriate safety measures are in place while building work continues.

The governing body has very recently undergone a review, as recommended in the inspection report, but its outcomes have not yet been received. A governor has recently been appointed with specific responsibility for looking at how pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it is having. As a result, governors have a more secure understanding of what the academy is doing to make sure these students

make good progress. They are using this knowledge to support and challenge senior leaders effectively about the progress being made.

External support

The academy draws on a variety of external sources to support its work. For example, an assistant headteacher has visited King Solomon's School in London to look at how pupil premium funding is deployed. This information is being used effectively to support the academy's planning in Key Stage 3. Local authority advisers have provided valuable support to the English department to develop an effective assessment system and to check assessments made by teachers in the department.

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

Yours sincerely

Lisa Moore

Her Majesty's Inspector