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18 June 2015

Mr Tim West
Headteacher
Potter Street Academy
Carters Mead
Harlow
CM17 9EU

Dear Mr West

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Potter Street Academy

Following my visit to your school on 17 June 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 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 school should take further action to:

- clearly define the role that all middle leaders are expected to play in the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of teaching and learning across the school.

Evidence

During the inspection I held meetings with you, the Chief Executive Officer of the Passmores Cooperative Learning Trust, the Chair of the Governing Body and the school's improvement partner to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan, along with other associated documents and visited classrooms with you to observe teaching and learning. I also looked at samples of pupils' work from across the school.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school since the last inspection although five teachers will be leaving the school at the end of the Summer term. You have appointed five teachers who will be taking up their posts in September 2015.

Main findings

You have acted quickly to address the issues identified at the previous inspection. Along with other school leaders, you have reviewed and updated the school improvement plan to incorporate the recommendations made in the inspection report. The revised plan identifies the actions which the school needs to take in order to be judged as good at the next inspection. You have set ambitious targets for improvement, along with appropriate timescales that will enable all school leaders, including governors, to review progress.

The inspection has led to a renewed focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. You have recently used staff training days to stress the link between effective teaching and pupils' progress. You are currently reviewing the school's teaching and learning policy so that it represents a shared understanding of what constitutes effective teaching and learning.

Since the inspection, subject leaders for English and mathematics have made more regular checks on the quality of pupils' work. They have also written action plans, aimed at accelerating the progress that pupils make. The quality of pupils' work in English and mathematics books shows good signs of improvement. Teachers increasingly provide good advice to pupils on how to improve their work. However, in other curriculum areas, such as science and geography, the work seen in pupils' books was not of a good standard. The work generally lacked challenge and teachers often failed to correct basic errors. Lack of clarity about who is responsible for leading these subjects means that areas of relative weakness, such as lack of challenge within the science curriculum, are not being addressed quickly enough.

Governors are ambitious for the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and continue to provide a good level of challenge and support to the headteacher.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has been well supported by the Passmores Cooperative Learning Trust. The Trust's Advisory Board and the Governing Body meet on a regular basis to review progress and consider what additional support may be required. An adviser regularly supports senior leaders and the Trust recently commissioned a two day

training course for teaching assistants, in order to improve their role in supporting learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]