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Richard Marlow
Headteacher
Heritage High School A Mathematics and Computing Specialist College
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Dear Mr Marlow

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Heritage High School A Mathematics and Computing Specialist College

Following my visit to your school on 29 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 March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, students, the current Chair of the Governing Body, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, who will take up post in September 2015. I had a meeting with the local authority representative to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans and self-evaluation were reviewed. I visited lessons with you and conducted a work scrutiny of books with leaders. A range of documentation was evaluated including: information on how teachers track students' achievement, records of the monitoring of teaching and information about students' current progress.

Main findings

You have been headteacher within the school since April 2015 and have taken swift action to revise the leadership of the school. Two lead practitioners from within the school will be joining the senior leadership team.

These practitioners are currently working with you to develop the middle leadership within the school. These leaders told me that, in a very short time, their roles were 'unrecognisable'. One middle leader said that she 'now had a voice'. All middle leaders spoken with, said that there was now more openness and an improved atmosphere to share good practice. They said that they were now held to account and that their line management was robust - this in turn, was supporting them to hold the teachers within their departments to account. All said that there is now a 'collective responsibility to improve.'

There has been a rapid response to ensure that leaders have a more accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning that is taking place within the school. As a result underperformance is beginning to be addressed. The new quality assurance system, 'Teacher on a Page', uses a range of evidence, including the Teachers' Standards, to build a view about the impact of teaching on students' learning. The capacity within the school to improve teaching is building and a further lead practitioner has been appointed to focus on the learning and progress of disadvantaged students. Moving forward, you are aware that quality assurance systems, although much improved, require developing further to ensure they are rigorous and do not overly rely on teacher self assessment.

The school Action Plan appropriately addresses many of the areas for improvement set out in the inspection report. Key actions are clear and criteria has been identified to measure success, including specific targets linked to the attainment and progress of students. The plan identifies the leaders who are responsible for ensuring that actions are completed and the specific milestones for when actions will be evaluated. However, although the plan identifies key milestones, they are not yet sufficiently frequent to allow for the very regular monitoring and review required to ensure the rapid improvement required. More clarity about these milestones is required in order to support governors in their work to hold leaders to account.

The data tracking system is now giving leaders and teachers 'much sharper' information about the attainment and progress of individual students and groups of students. Target setting is now more appropriately focused on the progress that should be made from individual starting points and you are working hard to develop the 'data literacy' within your school. This is resulting in swifter intervention for students at risk of falling behind, and better achievement for students currently in the school. The quality of assessment is improving and external moderation has taken place. More students are on track to achieve the expected progress within English and mathematics. However there remains much to be done to ensure that

students' achievement is good within mathematics. You have a clear plan in place to make sure the gap in performance between disadvantaged students and their peers is addressed.

Scrutiny of student work shows that marking is not used consistently well. The sample of English books seen showed some good examples of how marking and feedback can help students move their learning on. However the sample of marking seen in mathematics books showed inconsistent marking and low expectations as to what students could achieve.

There is an ambition from the governing body to ensure that leaders are held to account so that improvement takes place. Plans are in place for a new Chair of Governors and two Vice Chair of Governors to be in place from September 2015. A review of governance has happened and the recommendations from this, acted upon. The governors spoken to said that, they were keen to 'professionalise' their role. Training has taken place to improve and build their knowledge and understanding.

External support

The school has received good support from the local authority. The local authority adviser is extremely well informed about the school and well aware that, although there has been rapid change since the headteacher joined the school, the leadership team is very new and continues to need the help that the local authority can provide.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire local authority.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority Derbyshire