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23 December 2015

Mr Paul Gray  
Headteacher  
Poole High School  
Wimborne Road  
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Dear Mr Gray

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Poole High School**

Following my visit to your school on 10 December 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 June 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 in order to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, pupils, a group of teachers, the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I also scrutinised records relating to pupils' outcomes, the monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, safeguarding and the behaviour of pupils.

### **Context**

Since the previous Ofsted inspection, you joined the school as headteacher, commencing in September 2015. A number of other staffing changes have also taken place, including increasing the size of the senior leadership team and appointing some new subject leaders.

## **Main findings**

You have made a very positive start in addressing the areas identified as in need of improvement at the recent Ofsted inspection. Through your redefining of senior leaders' roles and responsibilities, they speak with more confidence and enthusiasm about the areas they are responsible for; the senior leadership team is a far more cohesive team. Teachers and pupils across the school are overwhelmingly positive about how the changes you have implemented have very quickly brought about improvement at the school.

Your main focus is, rightly, on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The training teachers receive is more individualised and enables them to work alongside effective practitioners regularly to observe, and learn from, their good practice. Teachers also have more opportunities to observe teachers in other subjects, to plan lessons together and to try out new ideas. Teachers welcome these opportunities and have fully embraced your determination to deliver highly effective teaching across all year groups and subjects, including within the sixth form. During a discussion with teachers, they said, 'there is a real clarity of raised expectations' and 'there is a lot more talking about teaching now'.

A new marking and feedback policy has been implemented which ensures that pupils receive more regular feedback on how well they are progressing. Pupils indicate that they now receive much clearer advice on what they can do well and what they need to do to improve further. The student 'Right to Learn Committee' are unanimous in their view that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved. Pupils say that teachers are more passionate about their subjects and their teaching; relationships between pupils and teachers are far more positive. As a result of improvements across the school, pupils are more engaged in their learning; attendance has risen and the proportion of pupils receiving a fixed-term exclusion has reduced significantly.

The processes and procedures to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have been strengthened. A weekly programme of monitoring activities ensures that leaders have a much clearer view of the quality of teachers' practice. Subject leaders are held to account for the performance of their departments more rigorously. They are now regularly involved in scrutinising pupils' books, conducting short visits to lessons and seeking pupils' views.

You have developed your use of information on pupils' achievement to ensure that you have a more accurate view of how each student is progressing. Teachers use assessments which are closely moderated to ensure that they are very aware of any student who is at risk of underachieving. Groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, receive more effective, individualised support to meet their specific needs. All teachers are more aware of disadvantaged pupils and use better strategies in the classroom to support these pupils to ensure that they make much better progress. The school's current information on pupils' progress indicates that more pupils are

making at least good progress across a wider range of subjects and year groups, including the sixth form.

Effective strategies are now in place to support those pupils who enter the school with low reading and literacy skills. The extra support provided for these pupils is highly effective in raising their key literacy skills; the increase in pupils' reading ages is particularly impressive.

Governors have strengthened their monitoring of the effectiveness of the school through linking more closely with departments. They visit subject leaders more regularly to monitor for themselves the impact of actions taken by senior leaders. Governors are better informed by senior leaders about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' achievement; they are more confident to challenge leaders to ensure that the pace of improvement is maintained.

### **External support**

You access highly effective support from the Jurassic Coast Teaching Alliance. In particular, helpful support is being provided to develop the quality of leadership at the school and to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The local authority has offered further support as required and has set you challenging targets. It is monitoring the school's progress closely.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**