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Mr Andrew Baker
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Dear Mr Baker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Poole Grammar School

Following my visit to your academy on 1 July 2016, 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 December 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.

The academy should take further action to:

- raise the levels of challenge to ensure that pupils are thinking even more deeply about all the subjects they are studying
- ensure that feedback in all subjects is in line with the school's policy of providing pupils with clear information on what they do well and how to improve
- ensure that governors continue to increase the rigour of their strategic oversight of the school's performance.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other school leaders and governors to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. The school's action plans

were evaluated. I observed learning in lessons and took the opportunity during these visits to speak to pupils and look at their work. In addition, I examined the school's information on the academic progress that pupils are currently making.

Main findings

You, your staff and governors have reacted quickly and are beginning to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Your response has been a positive one: as one governor put it, the school has taken the result of the last inspection as an 'opportunity' to focus on thoroughly improving the standard of education offered by the school. As part of this process, the school has produced clear action plans which closely address the areas of the school's work which need to improve.

You have undertaken an external review of governance by a national leader of governance, as recommended at the time of the last inspection. You have only just received the results of this review and it has, therefore, yet to reveal its full impact. Nonetheless, governance is improving. Training for governors, for example in data analysis, means that they now have a better understanding of pupils' progress. Moreover, improved recording of governors' meetings means that actions decided upon are clearer and easier to follow up. Governors, therefore, are in a position to increase the rigour with which they challenge and support the school's leaders in promoting school improvement. Governors are regular visitors to the school and visit lessons and look at pupils' work when doing so. They recognise, however, the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between their role of strategic oversight and the operational management of the school.

School leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is much improved so that they now have a clearer understanding of strengths and weaknesses. This has enabled senior leaders to hold subject leaders and teachers to account for the progress that pupils make as a consequence of the teaching they receive. You have also been working to enhance the roles of heads of department to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the subject areas they lead. As a consequence, the quality of middle leadership in the school is improving.

There are indications that teachers are raising their expectations of pupils and what they can achieve. This was evident, for example, in two physics lessons: in one, pupils were studying a topic that went beyond the requirements of the exam specification; in another, pupils were undertaking an imaginative and demanding exercise in experimental design. As a result of approaches such as these, pupils are now being asked to think more deeply about the subjects they are studying. For the more able, the school is now focusing on providing pupils with extension tasks which get them to apply their knowledge in different contexts rather than simply asking them to do more of the same work. There is still, however, more work to do in this area of improving teaching.

As a school, you have been focusing on improving the quality of feedback that

pupils receive from teachers about their work. This is having a positive impact in some subjects, but it is clear that the school's policy is not yet being followed consistently across all subjects.

External support

The school has taken a positive approach to working with other schools and external advisers. It is currently working with the Quay School in Poole and with Bournemouth School for Girls. You are also able to draw on support and advice from the other schools in the South West Academic Trust, of which you are a member. In addition to the external review of governance you have also commissioned an external review of the science department by an adviser from a neighbouring local authority.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Poole. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee
Her Majesty's Inspector