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David Hadley-Pryce
North Bromsgrove High School
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Stratford Road
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Dear Mr Hadley-Pryce

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to North Bromsgrove High School

Following my visit to your school on 11 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The Ofsted action plan and school development plan were evaluated. You joined me on brief visits to some lessons. A range of documentation was reviewed including new behaviour, marking and assessment policies, evidence of intervention work and the new student tracking model.

Context

Two new assistant headteachers will join the senior leadership team in September. This will considerably increase existing leadership capacity. There have been a small number of teachers leaving the school. Most have been replaced; however, the school has been unable to recruit a mathematics teacher and will make use of non-

specialist teachers within the school staff until an appropriate appointment can be made.

Main findings

Following the inspection, senior leaders acted quickly to put in place actions to address the identified issues.

A short-term Ofsted action plan was drawn up that gives a week-by-week break down of actions to be taken. These include:

- staff training on motivating and challenging students and questioning to engage
- staff training on marking and the use of homework and the development of new marking and homework policies
- an audit of spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision within the curriculum
- the introduction of a target week of personal, social and health education for students in Year 9 and 10
- the development of a new student tracking system to enable a more accurate analysis of student attainment and progress

However, these actions are taking place without a clear idea of how their impact will be monitored.

Lesson observations take place three times a year through performance management arrangements. These have been improved in the last term to make use of paired observers to produce more rigorous judgements. However, there is no systematic monitoring of the impact of new teaching and learning initiatives to check that training is being put into place.

The new marking policy allows departments to have considerable flexibility but with agreed minimum standards. However, a local authority review at the end of June still found considerable inconsistencies in the quality of marking.

Well-targeted intervention strategies are in place to support students in Years 9, 10 and 11 who are in danger of falling behind in their work.

The school development plan merges effectively the vision for improvement, the current evaluation of performance and the broad targets for improvement. However, the plan lacks detail and the broad targets need to be broken down into small measurable steps with success criteria. This will enable governors to identify when the target has been completed.

Governors have undertaken a needs audit and the Vice Chair has participated in training on monitoring. They are committed to keeping the pace of improvement high and have organised a review of governance to take place next term.

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:

- develop rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure the impact of new initiatives and training is carefully checked. Monitoring activities should be planned in advance of the introduction of initiatives and a recording mechanism introduced.
- support governors in accessing a range information about the quality of teaching and its impact on student outcomes
- ensure the 2013-14 development plan follows on from the Ofsted action plan and provides detailed actions for improvement and key milestones
- develop the planned actions currently underway to improve teaching and learning so that more targeted support can be provided where needed
- introduce a programme of activities to ensure students have full access to a personal, social and health related curriculum.

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

External support

The school has been proactive in building partnerships with external agencies. It has found additional support through a local high school and a teaching school alliance to improve the quality of teaching. The school is working closely with its feeder middle schools to support effective transition and more rapid student progress. The local authority knows the school well and holds a monthly project board meeting between advisors and senior leaders at the school. The local authority is providing considerable support for underperforming teachers and leading targeted reviews, including the review of the governing body next term.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah James
Her Majesty's Inspector