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17 December 2013

Philip Poulton  
Headteacher  
Ludlow Church of England School  
Bromfield Road  
Burway  
SY8 1GJ

Dear Mr Poulton

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ludlow Church of England School**

Following my visit to your school on 16 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector 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 on 17 October 2013. 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:

- refine the school action plan to:
  - focus on achievement and specific actions needed to accelerate progress for students in Years 10 and 11, especially in English
  - reduce key actions into small steps, linked to measurable targets that must be met along the way to being a good school
  - increase the level of accountability through identifying key staff who will be responsible for leading on, and delivering, particular actions
  - sharpen the timescales for monitoring to make sure this is both rigorous and frequent
- raise the aspirations of all students through setting challenging targets which will lead to students making better than expected progress

- carry out regular checks on teaching to make sure all teachers use the high quality data that is available to plan activities which challenge all students and ensure no time is wasted
- ensure that all teachers' marking gives students clear 'next steps' which identify gaps in knowledge and specific targets they need to follow for them to improve, instead of quantity or presentation

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, three subject leaders, two members of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and a Local Leader of Education who has been providing the school with external support, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Together you and I carried out a number of visits to lessons in Year 10 and in Year 11 in mathematics, geography, history and science to observe students' learning and to look at work in their books. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's information about students' progress and the school's action plan. I also undertook an extensive work scrutiny with the English subject leader and a member of your senior leadership team.

## **Context**

There have been some changes in staffing since the school was inspected including the appointment of new subject leaders in English and in humanities.

## **Main findings**

Senior leaders and governors believe every student deserves a good education and you are taking action to make sure this happens.

You have introduced a new system to monitor and track progress using average points. This is proving to be effective in identifying students who are underachieving and you are planning strategies to make sure they do not fall behind. The progress of students who are eligible for Pupil Premium is now closely monitored by all teachers. In the best lessons, support is provided on an individualised basis which correctly identifies where there are weaknesses and teachers check if this support has made a difference.

In some areas, subject leaders are becoming accomplished in using conversion charts to identify where progress is not yet good enough and to drive their support strategies for individual students or particular ability groups. Not all students are clear about their targets though and some do not have the confidence to aim for more challenging targets.

The school is working hard to improve the consistency in the quality of teaching. Subject leaders are taking effective steps to improve the reliability of their assessments. In English, the team works together to plan assessments, and carry out regular marking and moderation. You have also introduced an effective approach

to developing teaching skills through sharing good practice: coaching strategies are used extensively with teachers who deliver good and outstanding lessons working with those whose lessons are not yet good. It is too early yet to see the full impact of initiatives on improvements in the quality of teaching over time and you recognise there is still work to do to improve the quality of marking and teachers' confidence to plan challenging activities for all students, all of the time.

Governors have supported you to improve the quality of teaching in certain areas through the careful management of staff, and by making strong new appointments. As a result of the new appointment to the English department, English assessments have become more reliable due to the more coherent focus on curriculum planning, assessment and moderation of students' work. Governors continue to develop their skills in using data. They have requested further training on how the school uses average points scores to set challenging targets and to stretch students especially those in Key Stage 3.

Your action plan still needs make more explicit what the school must achieve for it to become good. The timescales in the plan need refinement to demonstrate greater urgency. I intend to revisit in the spring term to review the school's progress and to check on the impact of the strategies to improve the quality of teaching.

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**

School leaders are working successfully with a Local Leader of Education, to improve areas you have identified as needing support. The local authority has also provided support for a number of subject areas and this is proving to be effective.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Diocese of Hereford and the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**