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22 January 2014

Gareth Lloyd
Pedmore Technology College and Community School
Grange Lane
Pedmore
Stourbridge
DY9 7HS

Dear Mr Lloyd

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pedmore Technology College and Community School

Following my visit to your school on 21 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors responsible are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in November 2013. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all actions have clear, measurable outcomes that will enable next steps planning post March 2014
- ensure that governors' data training enables them to challenge and question internal and external data
- embed the new marking and assessment policy so that all students know exactly where they are succeeding and what they need to do next.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last

inspection. A learning walk was undertaken, which included brief discussions with students about their work, and a scrutiny of the work of Key Stage 4 students across a range of subjects was completed. The school improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection the head of Year 11 has left and will not be replaced until the leadership re-structure has been agreed. There has been a new head of geography appointed who took up post in January 2014.

Main findings

You are taking effective action to address the key areas for improvement in the last Ofsted report. Although the judgement was a disappointment for the school, leaders and staff have responded positively and are keen for the school to move to good as quickly as possible. This means that new and recent processes and procedures have been taken on board rapidly and there are therefore already early signs of improvement.

Planned actions for improvement are well focused on the areas identified at the last inspection and build on the priorities already identified by leaders in their school action plan. Those responsible for implementation and monitoring are clearly identified and there is a clear timeline for evaluation and review of impact. However, in some cases, success criteria need to be refined to ensure that you are able to measure progress precisely and over time.

A more rigorous quality assurance system has been put in place that holds teachers and middle leaders to account for the achievement of students over time. A detailed calendar of quality assurance activity has been agreed and published so that all staff know exactly what is expected of them; how they will be held to account and when they will be monitored.

Middle leadership is improving following a restructure of line management processes and expectations. Subject leaders are now expected to meet weekly with their line managers in order to report on their analysis of data and achievement and are held accountable for improvement. This means that you and your senior leaders are now able to identify underperformance rapidly and ensure that appropriate interventions have been put in place.

In addition, leaders for English and mathematics have been able to access national and regional training through the school's membership of Partners in Excellence alongside a deputy headteacher, which focuses on strategies to raise standards. They are provided with time to meet on a weekly basis to share good practice and support each other in continuing improvement. As a result, in year school data shows that both expected progress and more than expected progress rates in English and mathematics are already improving.

Training is highly focused through the Wednesday morning sessions, which are popular with staff. These sessions allow a rapid response to identified needs as well as providing opportunities for sharing good practice because staff are asked to lead sessions based on the work they have done to achieve improvements in specified areas.

You have introduced a new marking and assessment policy and there are signs that written feedback to students is beginning to improve. However, at this early stage of the pilot period, this is not yet consistent across or within subject areas and some key issues remain. For example, there is currently little evidence that marking for literacy is in force. Teachers are beginning to identify 'next steps' more clearly but comments about what aspect of work has been done well are often too vague to be helpful to students. Nevertheless, the introduction of 'fix it' time has been received very positively by students. They report that it is helpful to be able to discuss written feedback with their teachers and they appreciate the time provided to improve their work.

The school has worked hard to establish an effective transition hub with primaries for literacy. This has worked well with signs that students are better prepared for Year 7 and this year the hub will extend to include numeracy. Primary schools have found the collaborative working very useful and have asked for ICT and science to be added. Clear evidence of its impact in terms of more rapid progress in Year 7 will now be a focus for the school.

Governance of the school is strong. Governors know the school well and are clear about the areas for improvement. They could discuss in detail where progress had already been made and the impact of actions taken. They are kept well informed by you and your leaders and provide both challenge and support. They are keen to ensure that they further develop their ability to analyse key data first hand, so that they can effectively question performance over time.

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 local authority has provided light touch support prior to the Ofsted inspection. Since then they have worked with the school to broker support, particularly for mathematics. They are confident that you will be able to achieve the improvements required to move to good.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Dudley and as below.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector