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Janice Fletcher
Coppice Performing Arts School
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WV11 2QE

Dear Mrs Fletcher

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Coppice Performing Arts School

Following my visit to your school on 2 April 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 January 2014. 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:

- monitor the impact of the new marking policy to ensure that written feedback is of a consistently high quality
- monitor the development of pupil response time to marking and measure its impact on improving outcomes for students
- ensure that senior leaders provide specific success criteria and models for key actions so that staff are clear about what they should be aiming for
- Ensure that the part played by governors in monitoring the school's progress is clearly identified.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the governing body, and representatives from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated, a tour of the school was undertaken and a number of short visits made to classrooms. A meeting was also held with a group of students.

Context

There have been no significant staffing changes since the last inspection.

Main findings

You are taking effective action to move the school forward. School leaders, governors and staff, although disappointed by the judgement made, have responded positively to the Ofsted inspection and have rapidly initiated improvements and increased the pace of development for those actions already in place.

You, your senior leaders and governors have a shared purpose to achieve rapid and sustained improvement and this is reflected in your plans. Documentation shows how the school will address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Plans clearly identify who is responsible and show how improvements will be implemented and monitored. In some cases there needs to be a clarification of what a successful outcome to an action will look like, so that the measurement of progress is clear and staff tasked with implementing actions know what they are aiming for.

You have moved quickly to improve the quality of teaching in the school. A range of training has been provided at whole school level and there has been a strong focus on training that will support improvements at subject leadership level. This has been further supported by the development of additional, directed time for sharing good practice. For instance you have introduced a weekly staff briefing for teaching and learning which allows you to focus specifically on key issues for the school. Twilight coaching sessions are beginning to have an impact as staff increasingly share good practice as a matter of course. The school's own internal data shows that of 38 staff observed so far, 80% were judged as good or better. This represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection.

The school has moved rapidly to address the key issue of data collection and analysis to enable efficient and effective tracking of all students, including vulnerable groups of students across all year groups. This means that senior leaders are now able to identify where students or groups of students are underperforming or at risk of doing so. For instance in mathematics and science, which were key areas for improvement at the last inspection, a two weekly cycle of assessment and data analysis means that subject leaders are able to put interventions into place rapidly. All subject areas are now required to provide progress data every six weeks. This

more frequent analysis of students' progress is also leading to teachers planning lessons and activities that more accurately match the abilities of different groups of students. This is beginning to pay dividends, particularly in mathematics where the school's in-year data shows that progress has accelerated and targets set at the beginning of the academic year have been exceeded. Data analysis and tracking of student progress is equally rigorous in KS5 and this is having an impact on the progress of students, particularly in Year 12.

You have reviewed the school's quality assurance systems and as a result of changes made, middle leaders are now held to account more effectively both for the progress of all groups of students and for the quality of teaching. A cycle of departmental reviews, driven by data and/or specific, identified issues are due to become part of the quality assurance programme and you and your senior leaders are clear about how this process will link with performance management.

A new marking policy has been introduced. Teachers are now required to assess all students every three weeks, providing detailed feedback to students so that they know how to improve further. Although evidence of this was seen in some students' books, this was not consistently the case. Similarly, the newly introduced requirement to provide students with time to respond to teachers' comments has not yet had time to embed into every day practice.

Students are very positive about the changes you have made to the school's behaviour policy. They report that behaviour in classrooms has improved as a result, because students are now very clear about the consequences of poor behaviour. They also say that the rewards system is effective in reducing poor behaviour. They are clear that, as you and your leaders had planned, the rewards outweigh the sanctions, so that more students have more reason to behave well. Good behaviour was a feature of the short visits to lessons during a tour of the school.

The new vertical tutoring system has been welcomed by both staff and students. It has opened up additional opportunities for peer mentoring and sixth form students are now taking a greater role in supporting younger students. For instance, Year seven students who have not yet achieved level four in reading are supported through reading sessions with Year 12 and Year 13 students. This is seen as of mutual benefit to all those involved and you report a positive impact on improved reading scores.

Governors have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have been part of the improvement planning process and have a good understanding of the priorities. They have complete confidence in you and your leaders who, they say, have 'grasped the bull by the horns' through the rapid response to the Ofsted judgement. We agreed that it would be useful for governors to undertake refresher training to help them analyse data more independently. We also agreed their involvement in monitoring the school's progress should be made more explicit.

You and your governors agree that the school's current financial situation is a potential barrier to achieving good as quickly as might otherwise be the case and that it is likely that you will require further LA support to address this.

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 appropriate support both before and since the last inspection, including specific support for improving mathematics and science. Since then, they have made provision for half termly monitoring meetings, the first of which took place last month. They are confident that you and your senior leaders are able to bring about the required improvements.

The school has been proactive in identifying additional support from a range of good and outstanding schools in and around the area. This support has been carefully targeted and planned so that impact can be clearly evidenced.

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

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector