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Mr Richard Williman
Headteacher
Withernsea High School Specialising In Humanities
Hull Road
Withernsea
HU19 2EQ

Dear Mr Williman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Withernsea High School Specialising In Humanities, East Riding of Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 9 February 2015, 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 November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- ensure that the intermediate milestones in the school improvement plan are replicated in the action plan used by staff from the Blueprint Alliance Teaching School and that they relate to specific groups of students
- making sure that the skills of teaching assistants are recognised fully and that the lesson plans completed by all teachers reflect this
- consider if the start date currently proposed to develop numeracy across the curriculum should be brought forward.

Evidence

During the inspection I held meetings with you and other members of the senior team. I discussed the links made and the work already in place with a representative

from the Blueprint Alliance Teaching School. A representative of the local authority was present at that meeting. I met with three middle leaders so that they could talk about their work and future plans. The leader of teaching and learning took me on a learning walk to observe students in lessons and I evaluated your school improvement documents.

Context

Work has started to build new classrooms prior to some of the current site being refurbished.

Main findings

The inspection in November 2014 was viewed by senior leaders as a measure of how far the school had improved since the previous inspection. However, you and your colleagues made it very clear that you do not intend to rest on your laurels as there is still much to do. This view was echoed by those middle leaders I met. They confirmed that over time you have brought more rigour to their work. Robust systems are in place to check on and improve the quality of teaching and students' attendance, for example. Middle leaders welcome the autonomy given to them to make a difference and they recognise that they are held to account frequently. Intervention sessions are used regularly and the progress made by different groups of students checked systematically. You recognise that tightening up the intermediate milestones in the separate action plans is needed so that external observers and governors can see if additional help, for example through the work of staff from the Blueprint Alliance Teaching School, is making a difference.

Improving literacy is and remains a key priority for all teachers. During my visits to lessons the way teachers use the marking policy and provide opportunities for students to write at length is still inconsistent but improving. Ensuring that all teachers give equal importance to numeracy must start as soon as possible. We also agreed that the way teachers include teaching assistants in lessons is varied and at times an underused resource. There is, however, strong evidence that the school continues to move forward building on the systems already in place at the time of the inspection in November 2014.

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

External support

Local authority officers are continuing their regular visits to check if the school is moving forward as planned. In addition they are funding the link with the Blueprint Alliance Teaching School led by staff from Sirius Academy. This work, currently focussing on improving students' levels of literacy, is proving successful and provides

opportunities for English staff, in particular, to visit Sirius Academy. Plans are in place for other subject leaders from both schools to work together in the future.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector