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Mrs Lisa Walton
Headteacher
John Flamsteed Community School
Derby Road
Denby
Ripley
DE5 8NP

Dear Mrs Walton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to John Flamsteed Community School

Following my visit to your school on insert date of inspection, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in month and year. 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:

- Ensure that targets to measure the progress of disadvantaged students, boys and disabled students and those with special educational needs are sharp and understood by all staff and governors
- Develop the skills of subject and other middle leaders further to ensure that they can evaluate the quality of teaching in their area more effectively.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The head boy and head girl took me on a short tour

of the school. I scrutinized the school improvement plan and school's self-evaluation. Five short lessons were observed with senior leaders and the inspector spoke with students and examined their workbooks.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, a new headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed. In addition, a new head of humanities, a new head of technology, an English teacher and a technology teacher have also been appointed. The strategic leadership team was restructured and leadership responsibilities in English has changed to include a second leadership position. A new student services team was established and pastoral leaders have new roles and responsibilities in relation to students' progress. In addition, three teaching assistants and a food technology technician have been recruited. Three governors have resigned and a new business manager started her post in January 2015. Temporary fencing has been replaced with permanent fencing to secure the school site. Extra groups have been created in Key Stage 4, allowing teaching sets to have a narrower range of students' ability.

Main findings

Since you started at the school in September, you have made a positive difference to the school. Students and staff appreciate your clarity of vision and school priorities are communicated clearly. The progress of all groups of students is high on all meeting agendas. You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have put together a coherent plan to tackle weak areas, including those set out in the last section 5 inspection. The improvement plans are now sharply focused. You have ensured that progress can be checked by governors at regular points in the year. The planned targets are linked closely to students' progress measures. However, the targets in relation to groups of pupils are not clear enough. This means that governors may not be able to evaluate gains in their achievement as well as they should.

Your plans to develop teaching skills as a first priority have already led to improvements across the school, including attitudes to learning. Teachers deliver structured lessons and use data about students' progress to plan learning activities but with varying degrees of success. Where teaching is most successful, teachers prepare activities and target questioning well to stretch and challenge all ability groups but this is not true of all teaching. Students' workbooks show that there is a greater consistency in the quality and frequency of marking and feedback. Some marking however, still focuses too much on general areas for improvement rather than subject specific skills and knowledge development. This slows progress for some students.

Students' good behaviour is now a strong positive feature of the school. No low-level disruption was witnessed during the visit. Students' conduct outside lessons was

polite and courteous. Leaders' work to reinforce positive expectations of behaviour and create the right conditions for learning. Students say that there is very little bullying and teachers are always supportive. The introduction of a central 'students' services support team' is appreciated by students.

Subject leaders of English, mathematics and science have a sound understanding of their department's key priorities. They understand whole school priorities and targets well and carry out monitoring activities regularly. They have established greater consistency in their departments because students' work is marked regularly and lessons are planned using the agreed whole school teaching and learning structure. However, they have not all ensured that the quality of feedback from all teachers is as good as it should be. Core subject leaders have not carried out joint observations of teaching with senior leaders, to check the reliability of their judgements. Subject leaders admit that they are not always sure that their judgements are accurate. You are in the early stages of implementing new quality assurance systems and you have identified that subject leadership skills are not fully developed. You have also made plans for subject leaders to learn from best practice in other schools.

Governors have undertaken a full review of their governance. In addition, a skills audit has been completed. As a result of the review, governors have contributed to improving whole school improvement planning, making it easier for them to check on the progress towards agreed targets. In addition, students' achievement data, as presented to governors, is now simplified, making it easier for them to interpret. They have rightly insisted that achievement data in relation to departments are correlated with the quality of teaching in that area. In this way, they have a better view of the possible causes of any underachievement. Governors have improved the level of challenge for leaders with the introduction of 'scrutiny questions' during meetings.

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 continues to provide timely, strategic support for the school and your professional development. Termly reviews provide a valuable external perspective for you to help drive further improvements. The leaders of the English department are supported by a specialist adviser, who has helped to improve the reliability of students' assessments.

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy