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29 November 2012

Mr Jon Lawrence
Sir James Smith's Community School
Dark Lane
Camelford
PL32 9UJ

Dear Mr Lawrence

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Sir James Smith's Community School

Following my visit to your school on 28 November 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 in September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, two representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. A group of Year 11 students took the HMI on a tour of the school, visiting five lessons, to discuss their learning and teaching. The school development plan was evaluated and discussed. The HMI viewed documents relating to the professional development of staff and discussed the systems for checking on the attainment and progress of students.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staff or the school's organisation since the last inspection.

Main findings

Leaders and staff have pushed ahead quickly to improve the quality of learning and teaching. Teachers have joined one of three groups to trial and evaluate different ways to improve aspects of their teaching. This has brought teachers together from all subjects to consider the most effective strategies for securing the best learning.

Action planning is built effectively on whole school review, prioritises the improvement identified in the recent inspection and sets out suitable measures of success. The revised policy underpinning a programme of governors' visits links well to the work of the professional learning groups and the teaching and learning checklist provided to all staff. Evaluation of the implementation of action by governors is not written into the school's development plan and governors have still to decide how best to review their effectiveness.

Systems for checking on students' performance in all subjects have been pulled together in a common format, but targets for how much progress students are expected to make are not personalised. The information from this data are conveyed quickly to subject leaders. The students who spoke to HMI say that they are better able to understand how they can help themselves achieve well.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- identify within the school development arrangements for governors to evaluate the impact of work being done to improve learning and be clear about what measures they are to use ensure the process is securely based on evidence
- adjust the attainment and progress tracking sheet so that it reflects higher aspirations for individuals.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school draws effectively on the support from partner schools and the local authority. The local authority holds regular meetings with school to help build capacity around middle leaders. They have agreed to provide governors with training to help them evaluate subject leaders' performance.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector