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Mr Malcolm Christian
Headteacher
The Hurst Community College
Brimpton Road
Baughurst
Tadley
Hampshire
RG26 5NL

Dear Mr Christian

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Hurst Community College

Following my visit to your school on 27 February 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The first monitoring inspection took place in September 2013.

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 progress of students with special educational needs supported at school action plus and those students eligible for the pupil premium continues to accelerate
- involve middle leaders more in developing good and outstanding teaching in the school.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of Governors and one other governor to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a representative group of students to discuss improvements in the school. I went on a tour of the school, accompanied by senior leaders to observe the teaching of mathematics, English, science, history and art. I considered documentation relating to students' progress. I evaluated students' work and teachers' marking in a sample of students' workbooks and folders.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, one teacher has left the school.

Main findings

Initiatives introduced at the time of the previous monitoring inspection have had a positive impact on teaching and students' progress. Close analysis of students' progress, regular checks on teaching and carefully planned training linked to performance management have all contributed to improvements in teaching. Senior leaders and governors now work together with increased confidence and communicate a clear sense of direction and greater ambition to staff and students.

You have ensured that students benefit from more consistent and thoughtfully planned teaching that matches their abilities. Students feel more challenged to succeed because teachers take more account of what they already know and can do. Students say that they are inspired by some teaching in the school because of the passion and expertise of the teachers and highlight particularly compelling teaching in art and drama. However, the subject leaders of these successful areas do not have enough opportunities to share examples of their practice with the rest of the school.

Students are overwhelmingly positive about the improved feedback they receive from teachers' marking. During the monitoring inspection I saw clear evidence that students are presenting their work more neatly and that teachers are providing detailed feedback. Students follow up teachers' marking with corrections and respond to questions, which consolidates their learning.

Information about students' current rates of progress shows clear signs that most groups of students are making faster progress and that those students eligible for the pupil premium are catching up and gaps in their achievement are closing. However, more needs to be done to ensure that students supported at school action plus make accelerated progress.

Governors continue to challenge school leaders effectively. They have strengthened their understanding of the measures used to evaluate students' progress and visit the school more frequently to observe teaching and talk to students.

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 rightly regards the school as a medium priority for support. The mathematics department has benefited from guidance from the specialist advisory team. The local authority has reviewed the work of senior leaders through regular monitoring visits. Further advice about accelerating the progress of students supported at school action plus would benefit the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector