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13 January 2014

Valerie Dennis  
Headteacher  
Eastbrook Comprehensive School  
Dagenham Road  
Essex  
RM10 7UR

Dear Ms Dennis

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Eastbrook Comprehensive School**

Following my visit to your school on Monday 13 January, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report my 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 in October 2013 when the school was judged to require improvement. The visit 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 the recommendations in the review of governance are fully implemented, so that governors are well equipped with the skills needed to:
  - hold all staff to account for students' achievement
  - fulfil their roles and responsibilities by familiarising themselves with the new regulations for governors
  - develop an action plan
  - enable them to work with senior leaders on identifying priorities while supporting and challenging them
  - ensure that their meetings are planned and focused on the key issues affecting the school's progress.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, students, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, and the Divisional Director from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Various documents, including the external review of governance and minutes of governing body meetings, your own report to the governors, and the mathematics policy and action plan were scrutinised. During my tour of the school with you, we made brief visits to three lessons.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, a new assistant headteacher has been appointed. The post holder has responsibility for leading the teaching of mathematics and promoting numeracy skills across all subjects. The local authority has brokered a review of governance by a neighbouring local authority. Two governors with expertise in education have joined the governing body.

## **Main findings**

My discussions with you and other senior leaders, including governors, indicate a clear focus on raising standards further. Discussion with a group of middle leaders and other staff confirmed that they understand and share your ambitions for the school. You indicated that the process of monitoring teaching, providing support and holding staff to account for students' progress has been sharpened. You have taken decisive action to increase the use of performance management to drive improvement and, if necessary, move staff on. You reported that leaders at all levels are more focused on improving teaching. Teachers receiving support gave tangible evidence of the impact that coaching and monitoring has already had on their work and on students' progress. For example, observation of good practice has led to them making more demands on pupils. For example, in mathematics, Year 9 students are exceeding expectations and some are now working at level 6 and above. Similarly, in geography, students are more engaged with lesson activities: the more able are sufficiently stretched and, other students are beginning to work at a faster pace. Frank discussions with staff have left them in no doubt that there is now no hiding place or excuse for poor performance.

A new system to track students' progress is also reportedly making a difference to raising expectations and driving standards. There is a sharper and consistent approach to monitoring students' performance, in particular White British, more able and vulnerable groups such as those eligible for the pupil premium, and those with special educational needs. The school development plan is fit for purpose. However, you are clear that there is still more to do to engage all groups and parents in learning. Governors have increased their expertise to question you and other leaders

closely about students' progress by strengthening the governing body with two specialists in education.

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**

You and your staff report positively about the local authority's support through the reviews carried out in English and mathematics; visits from the link adviser and reading resources provided for all year groups. The support offered is good and focused on raising standards. For example, middle leaders indicated that the new reading strategy is increasingly leading to students enjoying reading and developing their comprehension skills. In addition, the advisory time allocated to the school is being used to discuss and challenge leaders about the rates of progress against the actions to drive improvement. The task of moving the school to good remains a sharp focus, primarily as senior officers have increased accountability. The review of the school's capacity to drive improvement is kept under regular scrutiny at two levels. These include first, the extended Director's Challenge meeting and second, the annual Director's meeting.

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

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**