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Mrs H Brown
Principal
Shoreham Academy
Kingston Lane
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Dear Mrs Brown

Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of Shoreham Academy

Introduction

Following my visit to your academy with Stephen Long HMI on 28 and 29 June 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, inspected 17 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, staff and members of the governing body.

Context

Most of the 1368 students, including 205 in the sixth form, are White British, with around 5% who come from a mix of minority ethnic backgrounds. Twelve per cent of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. Around 4% of students speak English as an additional language. Just over one quarter of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the proportion of students who have a statement of special educational need is just below the national average. The academy operates vertical tutor groups within a 'schools within schools' model. The academy opened in the buildings of the predecessor school in September 2009. A major building project is underway and the academy expects to move in to purpose-built accommodation early in 2012. During the building work, students use separate

playing fields for physical education, adding a 15-minute travel time into each period taught. The academy has been successful in ensuring low staff turnover. The academy has specialisms of English and enterprise.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Students' attainment on entry to the academy is generally below average and their literacy skills are particularly low. Scrutiny of students' work in lessons and data from the academies tracking system show that students make good progress in relation to their starting points. Their attainment is quickly closing the gap with national averages. More than half of the Year 11 students are expected to achieve five or more A* to C GCSE grades, including both mathematics and English, this summer. Students respond positively to the good learning opportunities offered in most lessons but opportunities are missed to develop students' autonomy and give them greater responsibility for their own learning. Good self- and peer-assessment were seen in some lessons but students are not routinely encouraged and enabled to evaluate their own progress toward the learning objective for the lesson or their targets. Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified well and they are given additional support and guidance. Sixth form students also make good progress.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance is improving and the proportion of students who are persistently absent is reducing. Behaviour in lessons and around the academy is generally good, and rare instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with effectively. Exclusions, both the number of exclusions and days lost to exclusion, are falling and now compare favourably with those for other local schools. Student voice is playing an increasing role in aspects of the academy's work. For example, students are trained to observe lessons and they are involved in teaching and learning reviews.

The effectiveness of provision

Good progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching across the academy. Regular accurate assessment and improved tracking systems ensure that teachers are informed well about students' progress. Lessons are organised efficiently and planning takes account of the different groups of students. However, in a few lessons the most able students are not challenged sufficiently. Students are aware of their targets and the levels at which they are working but they are not always clear about the purpose of a particular piece of work and how it relates their targets. Teachers' marking of students' work often provides useful guidance on how work can be improved or developed but there is little evidence that this advice is acted upon by students. In most lessons, students have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills through paired work and whole-class

discussions. However, they are not always given sufficient guidance on how to record and organise their notes. Although teaching is generally good, the focus of leaders' monitoring in most lessons is on improving teaching rather than on the students' learning. Students are now ready to take on additional responsibilities and be more actively involved in their learning.

Good progress has been made in developing the curriculum, both in the main academy and in the sixth form. A 'competency' curriculum has been introduced for younger students to promote the necessary skills for independent learning and address their low literacy levels. There is good development of students' literacy skills across a wide range of subjects. There are good routes for progression in to the increasingly popular and successful sixth form. Curriculum development is closely linked to the academy's strategic goals. Good progress has been made in increasing the impact of the specialisms. There is a clear plan and goals for developing literacy, and work has been done to broaden the range of enterprise activities. Monitoring of participation in these activities is good but there has been less monitoring of their impact.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

Senior leaders have set a clear agenda for improvement and have been successful in raising the aspirations of staff and students. Monitoring of all aspects of the academy's work is systematic and accurate self-evaluation informs priorities for improvement. The leadership and management of teaching and learning has many strengths but lesson observations do not focus sufficiently on gauging what students understand and some points for improvement lack precision and are not followed up rigorously in subsequent observations. Lines of accountability are clear and there are good continuing professional development opportunities for staff that are focussed on developing capacity and which are responsive to needs. Middle leaders are increasingly effective in their areas of responsibility. Very good collaborative partnerships have been developed, particularly those with local primary schools, and the academy has taken the lead for developing locality partnerships. A number of projects led by the academy have had a positive impact on improving the learning of primary school pupils. The academy has a much improved reputation in the local community, which is demonstrated by a significant increase in the number of applications which put the academy as their first-choice school. The impact of the actions taken so far and the increasing rate of improvement demonstrate how effective the academy has been in strengthening its capacity for further improvement.

External support

External consultants have been used well to verify the academy's judgements on the quality of teaching and learning and to report on the effectiveness of arrangements

to support students who have additional needs. The School Improvement Partner has provided a good balance of challenge and support and the academy has responded appropriately to any issue raised in the regular monitoring reports.

Main Judgements

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

Priorities for further improvement

- Build on improvement to the monitoring of teaching and learning to:
 - ensure a greater focus on what students understand
 - provide consistently high quality feedback to teachers that informs improvement
 - follow-up points for development in subsequent observations.

- Provide good opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning and become autonomous.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Group at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Johnson Kane, Chair of the Governing Body
The Academies Group, DfE [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk]