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Mr Gareth Dawkins
Executive Principal
University Academy Keighley
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Keighley
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Dear Mr Dawkins

Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of University Academy Keighley

Introduction

Following my visit with Jan Bennett, Her Majesty's Inspector to your academy on 13 and 14 March 2012, 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, including an assembly and 18 part lessons, two of which were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team. Short visits were also made to observe support provided for small groups of students. Inspectors scrutinised documents and met with the executive principal, other senior leaders, nominated staff and members of the governing body. Students were also spoken with during social times.

Context

The University Academy Keighley opened in September 2010 in the same accommodation as its predecessor school. Staff and students moved to the new

buildings in April 2011. The academy is smaller in size than average with 670 students on roll, including 200 in the sixth form. There are over twice the average proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is broadly average. Most students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Pakistani heritage, but other groups including Bangladeshi and White British are represented. The mobility of students is higher than that seen normally with more students joining the academy other than at the usual points. The previous Principal resigned in December 2011. Since January 2012, the academy is being led by an executive principal and an associate principal who have been seconded from other schools.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

The standards reached by students when they join the academy in Year 7 are well below the national average. Students' have weak literacy skills and a high proportion of them speak English as an additional language. This situation is a particular challenge for the academy. The students' reading ages are currently being re-tested as results from the previous test were found to be unreliable. Early indications show that a considerable number of the current Year 7 cohort entered with reading ages below their chronological age. In 2011, which was the first year of results for the academy, the percentage of students gaining five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics was well below the minimum standard measure. The progress made by boys, students with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals was particularly weak compared to the progress made by girls which was broadly satisfactory.

Prior to the appointment of the current senior leaders, the academy's tracking procedures and analysis of standards was founded on limited information which gave an inaccurate picture of students' performance. Consequently, predictions were not realised and most students underachieved. During the inspection, leaders presented more precise evidence to support their view about students' progress. As a result, leaders are able to provide additional support and intervention for those students who need it most. Early entry English GCSE results for students in the current Year 11, indicate a slightly improved picture for both boys and girls. Alternative off-site provision is provided and is popular with students; this enables some students in Key Stage 4 to access and attain vocational qualifications in a number of subjects.

Attainment is low in the sixth form with both male and female students making inadequate progress. Although changes are planned, current students have not received effective advice and guidance at enrolment and thus have been recruited onto inappropriate courses. The assessments of students' work, done in January 2012, do not show an improvement in their performance.

The quality of teaching

During the monitoring inspection, inspectors undertook a number of lesson observations and also short visits to lessons and they confirmed the weaknesses already identified by senior leaders. Their evaluations are accurate but previous judgements have been generous. Rigorous training has ensured that lesson planning is now generally done meticulously, however, inspectors observed that despite students' capabilities being identified on paper, the delivery of lessons did not always take students' potential into consideration. The often poor or non-existent marking, where some teachers did not regularly identify common spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors in students' work, means that students do not know how to improve their work. Inspection evidence confirmed that some students' lose interest and application in their lessons because the work they are given is either too easy or too difficult. Off task and low-level disruption become the norm in some lessons and this adversely affects the progress of the whole class. At times, teachers and teaching assistants spoon feed information to students too easily and this restricts the students' investigative skills. Additionally, teaching assistants are not always effectively deployed to maximise the support available in class to help students learn. Inspectors observed times when opportunities were missed to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills in lessons. This was especially evident when teachers read information to students or did not encourage them to extend and develop their answers, consequently limiting their speaking and listening abilities. Leaders recognise that improving students' literacy and numeracy skills is a key priority. Although some teachers give developing these skills due regard in lessons, the lack of consistency is limiting improvement.

There is, however, evidence of strong teaching particularly when students are given work that meets their needs, the pace of lessons is maintained and students are able discuss their learning in groups as well as discover things for themselves. Teachers question students' understanding regularly and ensure that they spend long enough on different topics before moving onto a new concept. However, there is not enough good teaching to make up for the current underachievement of many students.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspectors saw that students socialise and generally mix well. They are polite to visitors and other adults. The vertical tutor groups are a strong contributor and sixth form students are beginning to take more responsibility, for example, helping younger students to read and leading assemblies. Attendance is given a high priority and there are clear systems in place to ensure that students attend regularly; overall attendance is broadly average. Recently, a more robust approach to ensuring better attendance by sixth form students has resulted in improvement, however, senior leaders recognise that more work needs to be done. Students report that pastoral staff are available regularly and they recognise that, as one student commented: 'there is a good atmosphere around the place'. There are no bells to indicate the start of lessons, however, students conduct themselves well and mostly arrive on

time to lessons. Punctuality is an issue for a minority of students, especially those in the sixth form, with lateness to lessons not challenged consistently.

Senior leaders and members of the governing body ensure that safeguarding is given a high priority. At the time of the monitoring inspection, current requirements were being met.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The executive principal has implemented a rigorous review of provision across the academy since his appointment in January 2012. He is ably supported by the associate principal and together they have formed a clear view of the challenges faced. They have communicated quickly their high aspirations for the academy to all staff and are providing a clear sense of direction for improvement. Self-evaluation has taken place throughout the academy and this is informing priorities which were confirmed during the monitoring inspection. Other senior leaders have clearly defined roles and most are relishing the opportunities afforded to them.

Accountability is paramount. Middle leaders recognise that they need to monitor their departments rigorously and report how they are going to overcome difficulties. Regular lesson observations and a structured programme of training takes place, nevertheless, senior leaders recognise that further training is required for staff. At present, both the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of middle leaders in particular, are variable and this is limiting the progress made by all students. Despite this shared drive for improvement with more rigorous systems and procedures, recently implemented, overall, leadership is fragile.

Senior leaders are strongly supported by members of the governing body. Governance has recently been re-structured so that leaders can be challenged appropriately and performance monitored rigorously. The Chair of the Governing Body, together with the executive principal and the associate principal are therefore securing capacity for improvement which is enthusiastically supported by other leaders.

External support

The academy makes extensive use of links with the Bradford Partnership and its sponsor, The University of Bradford. Through their connections with the University and the Partnership, members of the governing body managed successfully to recruit swiftly senior leaders to run the academy following the resignation of the previous Principal. Staff from nearby schools and other agencies have provided whole-school training, particularly focused on improving the quality of teaching. Additionally, senior leaders encourage and ensure that teachers are able to observe good practice in other schools.

Main Judgements

The academy has made inadequate progress towards raising standards.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching at all key stages by:
 - ensuring that the available information about students' capabilities is used when delivering lessons so that they meet the needs of all groups
 - making sure that marking is done regularly so that students clearly understand what to do to improve their work
 - considering how to make best use of teaching assistants skills so that they can support students effectively in lessons.
- Ensure that opportunities for developing students' literacy and numeracy skills are present and planned for in all lessons.
- Sustain improvements in attendance within the sixth form and ensure that all students follow courses commensurate with their abilities.
- Ensure that middle leaders monitor and evaluate their departments appropriately and take responsibility for the progress students make.
- Senior leaders, including members of the governing body, must ensure that the recently introduced systems and procedures are embedded and used consistently so that provision and improvements are accurately measured.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector