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14 March 2013

Mrs Krysia Butwilowska
Principal
The Parker E-ACT Academy
Ashby Road
Daventry
NN11 0QF

Dear Mrs Butwilowska

No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Parker E-ACT Academy

Following my visit with Kevin Sheldrick, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 12–13 March 2013, 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 monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other senior leaders, members of the governing body, the education adviser representing the sponsor and two groups of students. Inspectors observed 24 lessons taught by 23 different teachers.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all students.

Context

The academy is similar in size to the average-sized secondary school. An average proportion of students is entitled to support from government additional funding, known as the pupil premium. This funding is for children in local authority care and students known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average, as is the proportion supported at school action. The proportion of students

from minority ethnic groups is below average, and these are drawn from a range of heritage groups.

The conversion to academy status took place on 1 September 2012. Most staff transferred from the predecessor school to the academy. New appointments were made to some middle leadership posts, and the senior leadership team and the middle leadership team were both restructured.

Inspectors were aware during this inspection of a serious alleged incident shortly before the inspection. This is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the academy in response to this alleged incident were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection visit to inform inspectors' judgements.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

GCSE results in the predecessor school improved in 2012, and this upward momentum is being maintained. Students in Year 11 are making more progress than students at a similar point last year. Improvement is also evident for younger students and also for those in the sixth form. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are having their progress monitored much more closely and their progress has improved. Students known to be eligible for free school meals are also making improved progress. The impact of extra support provided by the government's pupil premium funding is evaluated after each intervention and is good.

The close monitoring of students' attainment is followed up with extra support to help students achieve their potential. This is applied more widely through all year groups in the academy than had been the case last year, with a positive effect. In mathematics, however, too much of the improved attainment is due to this extra support and not enough to better day-to-day teaching. The support for students who start their time in the academy with poor reading skills has improved. The extent to which students' progress is enhanced by wide reading around their subjects is limited however.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is better than it was when the academy opened, and the detailed records kept by academy leaders show this trend clearly. Teachers plan their lessons knowing the precise prior attainment of their students and teach lessons designed to move this attainment forward. The outcomes of assessment tasks at six-weekly intervals are collected for every student, are closely analysed and have their quality checked to make sure that this progress is maintained.

Teachers have clear objectives to their lessons and the quality of their explanations is good. The ways that lessons are adapted for students who are less able or for those who are disabled or who have special educational needs is improving. Some teachers use very interesting approaches to enrich their teaching, such as the use of voting machines in a history lesson. An interactive weblog is used in English to add resources and ideas that students can use to enhance their learning. In a geography lesson, a teacher used a team activity to enhance the understanding of issues surrounding international development.

In some lessons, however, teachers are less successful in adding extra challenge for students, particularly the most able. In these lessons, the use of higher order questioning and the use of problem-solving activities are underdeveloped. The quality of teaching in mathematics is not yet strong enough to raise standards without extensive additional support for students.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of students continues to improve. The decline in exclusions that had begun in the predecessor school has continued. Students feel safe in the academy. They say that the pastoral support that they receive has improved and they are confident that any issues arising between students are dealt with swiftly. Students also affirm that behaviour has improved in lessons and around the academy. Students' attendance remains at broadly the national average. Students know how to be safe online, and understand the recent additional guidance they have received on this from academy staff.

In some lessons, teachers do not make consistent use of the academy's policy on rewards and sanctions. There are occasions where inattention or students being off-task are not dealt with quickly enough or according to the policy. Opportunities are also lost to affirm high-quality behaviour.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The Principal and the senior team provide strong leadership and have been successful in developing the academy's ethos into one of high ambition and high expectations. The close monitoring of students' progress and of the quality of teaching have been assisted by much better data systems. This monitoring, together with much sharper management of staff performance and good opportunities for staff professional development, have led to improved teaching. The quality of middle managers has improved strongly and they are taking much more responsibility for the performance of students in their subjects and for the development of staff in their areas. Middle managers have themselves benefited from a programme for their own professional development as leaders.

The governing body, although relatively new, has rapidly taken effective charge of the academy's strategic development. Members of the governing body are exceptionally well informed about the academy's strengths and weaknesses and take

clear and decisive action to ensure improvement. Under their guidance, the management of the performance of staff has become much more robust. Governors are very aware of how the pupil premium funding is spent, and also of its impact. The academy's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

The curriculum of the academy has improved, and it now meets the needs, interests and aspirations of students much better in Years 10 and 11.

External support

The academy sponsor has provided good support that has been used well by the academy's leaders. This is evident in the quality of the sponsor-nominated governors, the quality of support from a link education adviser, the development of data systems across the academy and in advice on the use and monitoring of the pupil premium funding.

The academy continues to make use of local networks of schools and these links have been effective in developing the quality of teaching.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching further in mathematics.
- Ensure consistent use by all teachers of the academy's policy on rewards and sanctions.
- Improve the level of challenge in lessons, for more-able students, in particular, through higher order thinking, wider reading and more opportunities to solve problems.

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 published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robert Barbour
Her Majesty's Inspector