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Craig Morrison
Principal
King's Lynn Academy
Queen Mary Road
King's Lynn
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Dear Mr Morrison

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to King's Lynn Academy

Following my visit to your school on 15 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the Principal, senior managers, and a representative of the sponsors. The academy improvement and action plans were evaluated. Close attention was given to the academy's lesson observation system and to teachers' assessment of students' attainment. HMI visited 12 lessons to evaluate students' learning.

Context

Since the last inspection a total of six teachers have either left or will be doing so shortly. Recruitment of new staff is underway with new appointments in English and mathematics. A new building will be completed April 2013.

Main findings

Since the last inspection the academy has written a new self-assessment and action plan. Both have been carefully aligned to the issues identified in the last inspection. These documents are sufficiently detailed and self-critical. Timescales and deadlines are realistic, and lines of accountability are clear. Strategic and overall action plans are translated into actions at subject level well.

The academy has, rightly, given priority to the improvement of teaching and learning. Much professional development has taken place, both at individual and whole-school level. Demonstrable improvements have taken place in the teaching of some subjects, notably mathematics and English. This is having a positive impact of the achievement of expected levels at Key Stage 3 and on the predicted GCSE results for these subjects.

The academy's lesson observation system is accurate in its evaluation of teaching, but not of learning. For example opportunities are missed to identify whether the learning in class is at a level that stimulates all, or whether it is pitched too low. In class, assessment is now regular and systematic across the school. It is mostly accurate, particularly so in English and mathematics where much development has been undertaken. Despite this, assessment is not always used effectively to structure learning. In such lessons the work is too hard for some and too easy for others. This results in some students becoming bored, and often their behaviour deteriorates. Too few students have well-developed skills of independent learning because they are not given sufficient opportunity to develop them in lessons.

The academy has made significant progress in the management of behaviour. Rules and consequences are clear. Notably, the academy now has an inclusion room where students can continue their work under supervision if they have to leave lessons. The number of exclusions is falling. Attendance and punctuality are improving.

The academy sponsors are a nearby Further and Higher Education institution and the local authority. Both bring strengths to their role, especially in the opportunities for students to progress. Governors have encouraged a much closer working relationship between the academy and sponsor institution, so expertise and good practice is shared more effectively. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are sufficiently challenging and, together with senior managers, are not prepared to tolerate poor performance. The identification and sharing of good practice is improving.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommends that further action is taken to:

- Ensure that the academy's lesson observation system accurately monitors learning in class, for example when it is slowed by weak skills of independent learning or behaviour.
- Ensure that the results of assessment are used in lessons to ensure that all students are challenged to learn effectively

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The academy has received support from the local authority to improve attendance. It has benefitted from the government-supported 'Achievement for All' programme, aimed at boys underachievement. This has included support to ensure the accuracy of assessment. Funding support has been received for a Key Stage 2 primary school coordinator, and for a coordinator for extra-curricular activities and employer involvement in the academy.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector