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Jeremy Chopping, Headteacher
Daubeney Academy
Orchard Street
Kempston
Bedford
MK42 7PS

Dear Mr Chopping

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Daubeney Academy, Bedford

Following my visit to your academy on 23 April 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.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2013.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher responsible for the development of teaching, the subject leader for English, the Chair of the Governing Body, and your local authority school improvement adviser. I evaluated the academy action plan and looked at your monitoring records of teaching. In addition, you provided a tour to familiarise me with your academy.

Context

There have been no contextual changes since the recent section 5 inspection.

Main findings

The action plan focuses clearly on the priorities for improvement identified in the inspection. Inspectors asked you to improve the quality of teaching, accelerate the progress of more-able students and raise the standard of students' writing, particularly boys'. You were also asked to monitor teaching more rigorously.

Your plan shows clearly when you are introducing improvements and success criteria against which you can measure the progress made. However, the plan does not help governors to focus their support and time their challenge because the review points are not explicit enough. The plan identifies which senior staff are responsible for leading improvements but does not show how and when all staff will contribute. In particular, the role of progress leaders in helping to monitor provision is not clear enough to secure better achievement for students, including those of higher ability.

Your monitoring of teaching indicates that actions taken to improve teaching are beginning to have a positive impact; the proportion of good or better lessons observed has increased since the inspection. Work scrutiny and discussion with students by senior staff also indicate improved learning. You are taking more account of students' learning and achievement when judging the quality of teaching. It is important that your feedback to teachers now draws on the wide range of evidence available, and is acted upon. This will contribute to the focus of the next monitoring visit.

Teachers' marking is an area of improvement that is already benefitting from better individual feedback to staff. A revised marking policy and staff training are also contributing. Staff are also now learning from good practice in assessment and marking in other schools that they need to adapt and apply. Your coaching programme is supporting weaker teaching. You should prioritise the strategies that engage all staff in refining and sharing their practice in order to speed up improvements.

You are working on improving boys' writing, which is well informed by the subject leader's research, discussions with students, visits to other schools and a number of interesting initiatives. The subject leader has raised the profile of writing, which is evident in the displays of writing by girls and boys throughout the academy.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the academy, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- show how and when the academy plans to review improvements
- use the widening range of evidence to inform judgements about the quality of teaching and to promote more sharing of best practice
- align governors to improvement priorities, embracing work such as their 'new relationships' policy that is designed to strengthen the academy's capacity to improve.

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

External support

The academy has welcomed the support of the local authority. The school improvement adviser has helped to prepare the action plan, train staff in the use of data and identify good practice in other schools. Joint lessons observations with senior staff have been effective in moderating judgements of teaching because more evidence of students' progress and achievement has been taken into account. The school is also receiving support through the 'Achievement for all' initiative. The support of schools with a strong track record is starting to play an important part in raising aspirations.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector