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Mrs Pat Hunt
Interim Principal
Kingsmoor Academy
Ployters Road
Harlow
CM18 7PS

Dear Mrs Hunt

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Kingsmoor Academy

Following my visit with Linda Killman Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 1–2 May 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

HMI observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Interim Principal, the Chair and other members of the Governing Body, a representative of the sponsors, and the Principal-designate. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and made some shorter visits to small-group sessions to look at the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and small-group support led by teaching assistants. All teachers were offered professional feedback by HMI.

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 pupils.

Context

The predecessor school closed on 30 November 2012 and Kingsmoor Academy opened on 1 December 2012 in the same building under the sponsorship of the

Academies Transformation Trust (ATT). The number of pupils on roll has risen since that date. Two teachers have left since the academy opened and another resignation has been received. One teacher has been appointed on a short-term contract. The academy was led by two Interim Principals up to Easter 2013 and another Interim Principal is currently leading the school for the summer term. The recently appointed Principal-designate has withdrawn her application. The governing body and the sponsors must address this matter immediately.

The academy is smaller than the average primary school. The large majority of pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and so is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is twice the national figure. As a result, the academy receives additional government funding (the pupil premium) for nearly half of the pupils in each year group.

The proportion of pupils who need extra help with their learning because they are disabled or have special educational needs is average. These include pupils supported at school action, school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs. Pupil mobility is above the national figure.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Attainment is rising although variations remain between reading, writing and mathematics. The results provided by external tests, introduced by the academy leadership, show rising levels of attainment in Years 3 to 6. This improvement in standards was corroborated by a scrutiny of the pupils' books conducted by HMI. Progress is improving in Years 1 to 6 as a result of the improvements in teaching.

Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those pupils supported by initiatives funded by the pupil premium, progress as well or better than the rest of the school. This is due to the range of intervention support currently provided by the academy.

Standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not rising quickly enough. Children join with low starting points and make slow progress. Early reading, writing and number skills are still below expected levels because provision is weak. Inconsistency in the quality of teaching and the methods used to develop early reading, writing and number skills has been at the core of the difficulties faced by the predecessor school and now by the academy. HMI monitoring letters for the predecessor school expressed concern regarding the accuracy of the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum scores of pupils who are now in Key Stage 2.

The quality of teaching

The increasing proportion of pupils making expected or better progress since the academy opened is a testimony to the improvements secured in teaching and support. Nevertheless, some of the lessons observed required improvement, often where small organisational issues needed adjustment.

In a good Year 6 mathematics lesson personalised support developed from assessment tasks was enhancing the pupils' skills and confidence in readiness for the forthcoming national tests. Similarly, in a good Year 1 literacy lesson, pupils' writing improved rapidly because the teacher made very good use of a short video to focus the pupils' talk partner opportunities. By the end of the lesson, pupils of all abilities had produced short descriptive sentences at or above the level expected for their age.

Teaching provides clear expectations of the social and moral standards required of the pupils. Teachers' marking is completed regularly but not all comments are in language that is easy for all pupils to understand. Some support staff listen carefully to the pupils' ideas and question effectively to improve learning. In those lessons where opportunities for speaking and listening were prioritised, pupils made good progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The pupil's behaviour was often a positive feature in lessons. Most pupils enjoy learning. They want to answer questions and they take care over their work. In lessons where teaching requires improvement, a few individuals sometimes work slowly and talk to each other about things that are not connected to the lesson.

Teachers make clear the behaviour they expect but a programme of sanctions has yet to be standardised by the academy. Some small-group sessions present a challenge to teaching assistants where the combination of certain pupils or the range of work presented does not engage the group. A mentoring room has recently been established where one-to-one attention helps to calm pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties and are in need of adult attention.

Attendance at the predecessor school was above the national average throughout the last school year and remains so currently. Punctuality to school is good. Movement around the academy is considerate and pupils are caring of each other. Breakfast club and school dinners are positive social occasions.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

Each of the Interim Principals has brought forward positive developments. Significant work has taken place to develop a secure system that assesses pupils' progress and records the standard of their work. Difficulties remain with the accuracy of assessment data collected in the predecessor school; senior leaders and governors

are aware of the need to clearly, and accurately document pupils' attainment and progress.

A clear focus of each Interim Principal has been to improve the quality of teaching. This is proving to be successful as a greater proportion of good teaching was noted during this visit than in previous monitoring inspections.

The academy development plan is under constant review by senior staff and the governing body. They are relentless in their pursuit of the best education possible, but acknowledge that more needs to be done to raise standards and improve pupil progress. The work of the assistant headteacher appointed in September 2012 has provided much needed continuity and leadership during the transition to academy status and has helped with staff development.

The governing body brings considerable experience and local knowledge and it has worked positively with the academy sponsors. The strong administrative team have helped governors and the evolving academy leadership team ensure that requirements for the safeguarding of pupils are met. The academy website does not contain the required information regarding pupil premium expenditure.

External support

The academy has improved notably under guidance of the current Interim Principal. However, the sponsorship of the Academies Transformation Trust (ATT) has failed to secure the appointment of a permanent principal. The sponsors have maintained a good working relationship with the local authority.

Priorities for further improvement

- As a matter of urgency secure the leadership of the academy for the autumn term and appoint a Principal on a permanent contract.
- Ensure that attainment and progress is clearly documented from the time the academy opened.

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

David Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Chair of the Governing Body
The Academies Advisers Unit, DfE