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16 May 2013

Mrs Kirsten Harrison
Acting headteacher
Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre
Watery Lane
Newent
Gloucestershire
GL18 1QF

Dear Mrs Harrison

Special measures monitoring inspection of Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Following my visit with Judith Rundle, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 15 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection we met with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, a group of governors, the National Leader of Education (NLE) who is supporting the academy, a group of subject leaders, a group of pastoral leaders, two groups of students and a group of teachers. The Chair of the Governing Body joined other governors, the NLE and senior leaders for the feedback at the end of the inspection. We evaluated the academy's statement of action and improvement plan and analysed a number of documents, including plans for changes to the curriculum.

Context

Since the inspection the headteacher has resigned. From 8 April the deputy headteacher has assumed the role of acting headteacher and two assistant headteachers have been promoted to acting deputy headteachers. Other changes

have been made to the senior leadership of the academy to take account of these promotions. The academy is supported by the headteacher, who is an NLE, and staff from Cirencester Deer Park School. The academy is also supported by other external consultants.

The Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors have resigned. A new Chair and two governors have been appointed. The NLE has attended meetings of the governing body.

The effectiveness of the governing body has been evaluated along with external reviews of special education needs and the curriculum.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders have made a good start to bring about the necessary improvements. They have worked with the NLE and governors to produce an improvement plan. The plan covers all the areas for improvement from the inspection report. It has clear success criteria, monitoring arrangements and milestones to check how well it is progressing. The plan identifies the key staff responsible for actions and these include subject and pastoral leaders as well as senior leaders and governors. However, the plan does not state how and when actions will be evaluated or who will be responsible for that evaluation.

New senior leaders have set a clear direction to all staff about what needs to be achieved. Staff have received appropriate training on how to plan lessons which meet the needs of all students. They generally feel supported and understand the need for improvement. However, there is still some variability in how well staff set work for different ability groups within their lessons. While the frequency of marking has improved, its quality is still variable. Staff are aware of the increased expectations of their work but as yet not all have responded positively.

Senior leaders have made a good start in overcoming the challenges within the academy and responding to the findings of external reviews. They have identified the need to change the curriculum to better meet the needs of different ability groups. They also need to improve the way the academy identifies students who may need additional support because of their disabilities or special education needs. They plan to improve the effectiveness of the daily half-hour tutor session. Students commented that this was rarely used well.

The new Chair of the Governing Body has made it clear to the other governors that significant changes are needed within the academy. Governors rightly recognise that some changes will be challenging to staff as they will have to improve their current

practice and be held to account for their teaching and leadership. Governors are aware of the need to fully support the leadership of the academy while bringing these about. Governors are writing a plan to improve those areas which the review identified as needing improvements. Governors receive support from a number of external agencies including the Gloucestershire Children's Service governor support unit and the Gloucestershire Association of Secondary Heads.

The NLE is supporting academy leaders effectively. The acting headteacher is responding well to the NLE's mentoring, showing determination and increasing confidence. She is well supported by the acting deputy headteachers. The NLE and governors have rightly identified the need for further support from an experienced deputy headteacher as the existing team is inexperienced.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's statement of action and improvement plan is fit for purpose but needs further amendment by specifying how, and by whom, the impact of the actions in the plan are going to be evaluated.

Having considered all the evidence we strongly recommend that the academy does not appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs) unless I approve the plans to support NQTs during their induction year.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education, the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire and The Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector