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17 June 2013

Mrs Tyler-Maher
Headteacher
Cleeve Park School
Bexley Lane
Sidcup
Kent
DA14 4JN

Dear Mrs Tyler-Maher

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cleeve Park School

Following my visit to your school on 17 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

I met with you and your senior leaders, members of the governing body, the chief executive and the progress advisor from The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT). I reviewed your academy improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and documents about the monitoring and improvements to teaching. We toured the school to see students in lessons and discussed strengths and weaknesses in teaching.

Context

Since the most recent section 5 inspection leaders from The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) have been providing additional support to the academy.

Main findings

You and your leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses at the academy. Leaders understand that they have to move quickly to raise students' achievement to good but recognise that changes must be sustainable to ensure the longer term success of the academy. Working with leaders from the

Trust, you are refining your school improvement planning, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and the bespoke support you provide to teachers. You have made clear your high expectations of teachers, teaching assistants and students, so that everyone understands why the academy must improve rapidly. Teachers are learning new ways of managing challenging behaviour in lessons and how to teach more engaging lessons.

You have worked quickly to assess the quality of teaching. You know where the strengths lie and you are using models of good practice to help other teachers improve. You have challenging discussions with teachers whose performance is not good enough. Teachers have new targets for their performance and you have reviewed teachers' performance to assess if their work reflects their salary grade.

The programme of coaching led by your assistant headteacher, with additional expertise from the director of the teaching school for TKAT, provides teachers with good training. Sessions are focused on having a comprehensive approach to developing students' literacy in all subjects and to better lesson planning. Training is helping teachers to be more rigorous in using information about students' progress to set work matched to students' ability. The impact of well-led personalised coaching by designated mentors for staff, coupled with effective training sessions, is reflected in the higher proportion of good quality teaching. The inclusion of teaching assistants in all staff training ensures they are more aware of their key role in students' learning.

Leaders continue to refine the new marking policy introduced in September 2012. This requires teachers to give more detailed feedback to students and for students to respond and improve their work. We saw good examples of this in mathematics and design technology, but less so in modern foreign languages and English.

Your director of inclusion and the director for special educational needs from TKAT are gathering and regularly analysing better quality information about the achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs. Regular meetings pinpoint any gaps between the progress of these students and their peers at the academy. The progress made by disabled students and those with special educational needs, remains a key weakness, notably in Year 9. This needs to be tackled as a priority over the next six months.

Senior leaders are developing middle leaders' capacity to observe the quality of teaching, assess its impact on students' work over time, and to give constructive feedback to teachers. This is at an early stage of development. You plan to use a training programme for middle leaders devised by TKAT to develop this further.

The governing body is supportive of recent changes and is becoming more effective. However, they have much ground to make up. Governors have been more active in seeking and responding to the views of sixth form students about teaching and the use of resources. Governors receive information about managing and rewarding teachers' performance but are not asking sufficiently detailed questions about the

relationship between teaching over time and its impact on students' achievement. Governors have received training on interpreting achievement data and are better equipped to make comparisons between outcomes for students in the academy and students nationally. They do not yet focus sharply enough on how well gaps are closing, particularly for students eligible for pupil premium funding.

The academy improvement plan sets challenging targets for students' achievement and securing consistently good teaching. The plan will benefit from having more precision about the development of governance and more specific targets relating to the progress of different student groups, with clear timelines to evaluate how well these targets are being met.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- refine the academy improvement plan with more emphasis on strengthening governance, and specific targets for the progress of student groups throughout Key Stage 3 and 4
- ensure disabled students and those with special educational needs make more rapid progress
- undertake a review of the governing body to assess training needs and strengthen its understanding and analysis of achievement information.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

There is no formal, regular support from the local authority. Nevertheless, the academy draws on valuable local authority human resources advice and support with contractual and staffing matters.

Leaders from the Trust are providing good support. The combination of expertise from the director of the teaching school, the seconded deputy headteacher and director for special educational needs, is giving you additional capacity so that you can lead improvement work more swiftly at the academy. The chief executive and the progress advisor are making sure that expertise from across the family of TKAT academies is used strategically to suit the needs of Cleeve Park.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, The Kemnal Academies Trust, the Education Funding Agency and the Director of Children's Services for Bexley.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector