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Alison Ross
Interim Principal
Alec Reed Academy
Bengarth Road
Northolt
UB5 5LQ

Dear Ms Ross

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Alec Reed Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 20 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 school 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other leaders, two groups of students, and representatives of the governing body, including a telephone discussion with the Chair to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. All phases of the academy were visited. The academy action plan was evaluated together with other records of improvement since the last inspection.

Context

A number of posts in the academy continue to be held on an interim basis; including the Principal and Vice Principal positions. Two temporary teachers have been made permanent and several appointments made for September 2013, but vacancies remain in some key posts such as the curriculum leads for English and mathematics.

Main findings

At the time of the last inspection the interim Principal and interim Vice Principal had been in post for eight days and had begun to establish their priorities for improvement. In the relatively short time since then they have acted with even greater urgency to gain a deeper understanding of the development needs of the academy and establish the vision for the future. They recognise there is much to be tackled and have rapidly developed a comprehensive action plan which focuses sharply on improving the quality of teaching and the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The plan forms a secure platform for improvement. Timescales and review dates are shown but in places the required steps, expectations for success, and leaders and governors methods of checking progress are not defined with sufficient clarity.

A collegiate approach to school development is empowering and motivating staff, particularly through the three new staff working groups. The new teaching and learning handbook details expectations for staff, and how the quality of teaching will be monitored from September 2013. Subject leaders are growing in their roles and a few have undertaken initial evaluation of teaching with senior leaders, this is helping to establish with precision the areas of development to be addressed. Best practice in teaching is beginning to be shared. Some students said they were beginning to achieve more in lessons. However, there is an insufficient critical mass of outstanding teaching to raise expectations and accelerate improvement. There are no opportunities for teachers to work with or observe outstanding practitioners outside of the academy.

New and more efficient systems for recording behaviour and assessment information are giving leaders more accurate information on students' achievement. This also gives teachers more time to plan lessons more effectively and track student's learning and progress. Senior leaders took rapid action to support the current Year 11 in the lead up to their examinations; school data suggest this had a significant impact on their achievement. Students note that behaviour in lesson is improving as a result of the new rewards system.

Governors are supportive and are fully aware of the need for rapid action and to ensure stability in staffing across the academy to enable it to move to become 'good' with sufficient and sustained pace. They are holding academy leaders to account for the impact of actions taken. However, they are too reliant on reports from senior leaders and do not take sufficient steps, for example through academy visits, to check out the information for themselves. They have yet to increase the representation of parents in the academy's governance.

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

- ensure all the steps in the improvement plan are fully set out so that the success of actions can be measured at each stage, and that there is greater precision as to how leaders and governors will check on the progress being made
- provide opportunities for staff to observe and work with outstanding practitioners from outside the academy.

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

An external consultant has continued to work for one day a week with some of the teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This is leading to better and more consistent teaching in these classes. The interim Principal and Chair of the Governing Body have recently met with the local authority and a representative of an independent consultancy to discuss access to training and support. Whilst the interim Principal is keen to move this forward, this has yet to be agreed and programmed.

I am copying this letter to the academy sponsor, Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Ealing and The Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector