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19 June 2013

Mrs Jane Willis
The Headteacher
Nightingale Academy
34 Turin Road
London
N9 8DQ

Dear Mrs Willis

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Nightingale Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 19 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Director of Education from the sponsor, the improvement adviser appointed by the sponsor, and members of the senior leadership team. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement action plan were evaluated. The academy's single central register, which contains checks on appointment of staff, was reviewed and the Principal accompanied the inspector on a tour of the academy.

Context

A new head of the English faculty took up her post in May 2013 and the head of science is currently on extended paternity leave. The academy is in the process of an extensive building refurbishment, which has affected access to some teaching areas.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

The Principal, governing body and sponsor accept fully the findings of the section 5 inspection and are addressing the issues for improvement. Although the academy's plans for improvement are very detailed, its scope encompasses too many additional issues which detract from its sharpness. Currently, the plan contains no milestones when progress will be evaluated, although it is the intention of the sponsor to conduct a review later in the year.

A major focus has been to ensure improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The Principal has made appropriate use of human resource procedures for dealing with underperforming staff and expectations have been reinforced strongly. Through joint visits to lessons with middle managers, the senior leadership team has made staff feel far more accountable for the progress students make in lessons. The school has provided training for those staff whom they have graded as requiring help with their teaching and has introduced a programme of coaching and training. It has tailored this training to suit the needs of individuals, but has not yet conducted any evaluation of the impact of the training. A more recent initiative, where staff conduct visits to lessons to look at the progress students make, although in its infancy, is making staff more aware of the need to match their teaching to the needs of students. The academy has rightly recognised the need to extend its provision for literacy and plans have been adjusted to ensure that reading, speaking and writing skills are being systematically developed by all staff. Work is continuing on ensuring that marking is more helpful to students, but this is at an early stage.

The academy has continued to stress the importance of attendance and of the need to reduce persistent absence. This has resulted in a slight improvement. However, attendance remains stubbornly low. The academy has recently recruited a full-time education welfare officer, as well as increasing its administrative staff, to help in this important area. It has held conversations with the local authority over the volume of mid-term admissions which adversely affect these figures. The academy is not complacent and is determined to improve attendance.

Appropriate strategies are now in place to address the issues in the sixth form. An external adviser has been working with the academy closely and an improvement board has been established. A review has identified and altered some of the courses which are currently on offer to make them more suitable for the learners and the curriculum has been totally redesigned for the new academic year to ensure that students are much better matched to courses which suit their vocational and academic needs. An intensive course to help students make the transition from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 is planned, along with a very thorough induction programme so that students are well aware of the demands which will be placed upon them in the sixth form.

The sponsor has provided strongly focused support for the academy through its own Regional Director and National Director, both of whom sit on the governing body. They hold regular meetings with the Principal, holding her to account for securing improvements. The governing body is developing its role and is determined to ensure the school makes progress. It is becoming much more aware of its role in school improvement and has recently conducted a review of its own skills. Members of the governing body sit on attendance panels and the chairs of the committees sit on the Rapid Improvement Group which is checking the progress of the areas of improvement identified in the report.

Much remains to be done, but since the inspection, senior leaders, aided by the sponsor, have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas identified in the report.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

the school's improvement plan is fit for purpose

the sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority for Enfield, the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marcia Headon
Additional Inspector