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25 June 2013

Ms Marie McMahon
Principal
Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy
Lower City Road
Oldbury
B69 2HE

Dear Ms McMahon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 school 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 senior and middle leaders, and representatives of the Governing Body and the Ormiston Academy Trust to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy development plan and other documents were evaluated. We also made short visits to a number of lessons and activities.

Context

Since the inspection, substantive appointments have been made to leadership roles in the academy. There are 13 new members of the teaching staff due to start in September 2013 and this includes two experienced senior leaders from outstanding schools.

Main findings

In a short space of time, as principal you have continued to lead improvements well. There is no sense or acceptance of complacency in any aspect of the academy's work.

Changes to the responsibilities of senior leaders have better matched individuals' strengths to the academy's needs. Leaders set challenging targets for students' achievement and there is now better tracking of the progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs. Governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the academy's work and newer members of the governing body are developing their skills and expertise.

A good development plan has been written and the views of all staff, teaching and non-teaching, are being sought. The plan focuses on the key issues for improvement and enshrines your vision of 'Good all day everyday'. Some action has already been taken to develop students' reading skills, particularly for those who struggle to read well. Plans to improve this aspect of students' achievement are carefully considered including to make sure that all teachers have the expertise to support students to develop their reading skills. The academy has been invited to take part in a project organised by Ofsted to improve students' literacy skills.

There has been a very clear focus on quickly improving the quality of teaching which is beginning to have an impact. Leaders know where teaching is strong and where it requires improvement. As a result, training programmes have been established which help teachers to learn from each other, including to make more teaching outstanding. This sharing of best practice is developing well. The academy's records show that students are already experiencing better teaching. This was confirmed in the small sample of lessons we observed. For example, students were given good opportunities to work collaboratively in English, science and physical education and where there was a good level of challenge for students of different abilities in mathematics and history.

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:

- extend the opportunities to share good and outstanding practice in teaching
- make sure that all teachers, including those who join the academy in September, have the expertise to support students to develop and then use their literacy skills in all subjects
- make sure that the increasing expertise of governors is harnessed to strengthen further the capacity of the governing body to hold the academy to account.

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

Academy leaders are drawing upon external support well. The Ormiston Academy Trust has provided good support for governors, has identified good and outstanding academies in the Trust for leaders to work with and has conducted helpful reviews to identify strengths and development needs in identified subjects. Advisers have worked with subject leaders to strengthen their understanding of how to judge the quality of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Ormiston Academy Trust and the Director of Children's Services for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector