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Mr Jonathan Sherwin
Executive Principal
Belvoir High School and Melton Vale Post 16 Centre
Barkestone Lane
Bottesford
NG13 0AX

Dear Mr Sherwin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Belvoir High School and Melton Vale Post 16 Centre

Following my visit to your academy on 30 September 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- clarify the roles, responsibilities and management structures for heads of subject, senior leaders, the head of school, executive principal and the governing body to strengthen accountability across the academy
- carry out an external review of governance.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, the head of school, members of the senior leadership team, the head of sixth form, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor. I scrutinised a range of documentation. This included data relating to students' attainment and progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The head of school took me on a tour of the high school and we made brief visits to a range of classes.

Context

Since the previous inspection in May 2013, there have been no significant changes in academy leadership or staffing.

Main findings

The head of school and staff have undertaken a range of activities to further improve students' learning and their subsequent achievement at Belvoir High School. Senior leaders have stepped up the frequency of student progress reviews and lesson monitoring to improve teaching. They have also improved performance reviews of departments to ensure that teachers are more accountable for the progress of the students they teach. The action plan has been revised with clear targets added and a new tracking system has been developed showing patterns of progress for all students across the school. Staff are now clear about the expectations of progress for all students. A range of scrutiny, such as reviews of students' work, analyses of assessments and learning walks gauge how much progress students are making. All of this is helpful. While achievement has been sustained at the sixth form centre at above-average levels, it has dropped at the high school. For example, the percentage of students gaining five good grades at GCSE including English and mathematics fell from 71% in 2012 to 58% in 2013 which is 11% below its target. While progress levels have been maintained in English at above average, they fell in mathematics to broadly average levels.

At the inspection in May, it was recommended that the academy formalised links between middle leaders, senior leaders, the head of school, executive principal and the governing body to strengthen accountability. By the first monitoring inspection in July this had not happened and the academy was urged to attend to this urgently. It is evident from this visit that the roles, responsibilities and management structures have still not been clarified and this is having a detrimental effect on the leadership and management at Belvoir High School. This situation has the potential to stall the school's progress unless important management roles and responsibilities are secured.

The excessive time that it is taking to restructure management roles means that sustained progress is fragile. The governing body is in the process of addressing this, but a number of pertinent issues remain. The executive principal has prime responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning, as well as the oversight and management of all monitoring activities at both the high school and sixth form centre. The lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities at the next level makes it difficult for leaders and governors to know who is directly responsible for the provision and who to hold accountable for the progress being made.

The governing body has made efforts to resolve the difficulties arising from unclear leadership roles and responsibilities. It has very recently appointed an independent school improvement partner who is able to provide advice and guidance in seeing

this through. This is a good step forward. The external review of governance is now planned for.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I therefore intend to return in the late autumn term to review the progress that the academy has made in tackling the issues identified above. I will then report to the governing body on the progress that the academy is making in relation to the actions taken since the previous inspection and their impact on school improvement.

External support

The academy has now appointed an independent external school improvement partner with experience of working in multi-school trusts. Plans are already in place for her to support the academy in achieving the action points described above and to provide an external view of the quality of key aspects of provision across the academy. HMI has requested the school improvement partner to keep a close scrutiny of the high school, especially focusing on the impact of the executive principal's leadership on raising standards and improving teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire, The Education Funding Agency and the DfE Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector