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3 October 2013

Mrs Christine Parker
Headteacher
Redcar Academy - A Community School for the Performing and Visual Arts
Kirkleatham Lane
Redcar
North Yorkshire
TS10 4AB

Dear Mrs Parker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Redcar Academy - A Community School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Redcar and Cleveland

Following my visit to your school on 2 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 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. The school should take further action to:

- improve the quality of action plans to make clear the measures of success and how these will directly impact on pupils' progress
- make sure that planning makes clear who is responsible for checking that actions have taken place against precise timescales and who is responsible for evaluating impact
- use a wider range of evidence to check the quality of teaching over time
- establish stronger links with a partner school/academy to support you in improving teaching, leadership and governance further.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, seven pupils, three middle level leaders and five Directors. I met with five teachers, four assistant headteachers and had a telephone conversation with your school achievement partner. You gave me a brief tour of the academy and we visited some lessons.

Context

Four new teachers and two technicians have been appointed since the last inspection.

Main findings

Since the inspection in June, you and senior leaders have started to address the key areas for improvement. The issues regarding the health and safety of students, particularly in Design and Technology, have been swiftly addressed and have been confirmed by a recent local authority health and safety review.

There is now more attention being given to staff accountability for student outcomes, especially after some disappointing Key Stage 4 results in 2013. You have begun to develop a more rigorous way of tracking the quality of teaching. This has led to a clear schedule throughout the year when student progress will be assessed.

Students told me that you and your senior leaders have high aspirations and expectations. Students said there is greater consistency in enforcing the dress code, and the quality of feedback from teachers is improving so students are more aware of how they are progressing. Students are starting to be challenged more because teachers are beginning to use achievement data to plan lessons more effectively so that they meet the needs of all students.

The academy has started to share and develop good practice. You plan to introduce specific training with the intention to develop both teaching and leadership. The academy is in the early stages of establishing links with a partner school with the aim of improving teaching to accelerate students' progress.

You and other school leaders have undertaken further monitoring of students' work and teaching since the time of the inspection. The next step is to ensure that all leaders who judge the quality of teaching have the skills and experience to do so accurately. In judging teaching quality, a greater emphasis is required on the impact of teaching over time on students' progress. Teachers with whom I spoke agreed that they already felt more accountable for the performance of their students. The new performance management process is being developed to include students' achievement as a key objective in the assessment of teachers' effectiveness.

The action plans do address each of the areas for improvement from the recent inspection. However, to further increase the potential of the plans to support rapid improvement you need to include clearer timescales for when actions will happen. The plans would also benefit from the inclusion of measures of success that can be easily judged, and clarity around who is responsible for checking that actions have the intended impact. There are few opportunities to include directors in monitoring and evaluation of improvement work.

The teachers and directors with whom I spoke agree that the school requires improvement and they are well aware of the key areas for improvement. The directors are in the early stages of partnering with another governing body in order to develop their ability to challenge and support the academy. While the directors currently have a limited role in evaluating the academy's progress they are keen to change this quickly. They have valued the training that the external school achievement partner provided in developing their understanding of data.

External support

Following the inspection there has been limited involvement of the school achievement partner. A visit is planned for later this term to review the outcomes for 2013. The academy is in the early stages of planning with Richmond School in North Yorkshire, to establish partnership working to support the academy in addressing the areas for improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and as below.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority - including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] - for academies