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17 October 2013

Mrs D Price
Acting Principal
Ryde Academy
Pell Lane
Ryde
PO33 3LN

Dear Mrs Price

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Ryde Academy

Following my visit to your school on 16 October, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you, your staff and students made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in April 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Department for Education's Academies Advisers Unit, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2013

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in all subjects in order to raise achievement, by:
 - ensuring that all staff receive high-quality training that meets their individual needs
 - developing teachers' skills so they feel confident in teaching literacy, particularly writing
 - having high expectations of students' achievement and providing lessons that are briskly paced, interesting and allow students to spend more time doing and less time listening
 - making sure teachers use assessment information to match work to individual students' needs
 - making sure teachers demand high standards of presentation so that students take pride in their work.
- Improve confidence in systems for managing behaviour, by:
 - reviewing the behaviour and the anti-bullying policies, and taking the views of staff and students into account
 - creating an atmosphere of trust with students so they all feel confident in reporting bullying
 - implementing the reviewed policies and ensuring that all staff apply them consistently.
- The academy's leaders need to accelerate the pace of change and focus sharply on raising achievement in all subjects, by:
 - producing action plans that are clearly linked to thorough and accurate self-evaluation and have precise, measurable and ambitious targets, with clear procedures and timescales for evaluating the impact of actions taken
 - providing succinct and appropriate information for the governing body about all aspects of the academy's work.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 16 October 2013

Evidence

I met with you, your senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the academy's sponsor, who is also the Executive Principal. I talked to 28 students from Years 7 and 8 and visited 10 lessons briefly as part of a learning walk. These observations of learning were conducted jointly with two senior leaders. I reviewed a range of school documentation, including information about students' achievement, behaviour and attendance. This monitoring inspection focused in particular on the work that the academy has done to address the areas for improvement relating to behaviour and safety.

Context

The substantive Principal was absent at the time of the monitoring inspection. An acting Principal is in post. Staffing has been restructured since the last visit. Leadership roles and responsibilities have been fully revised. A member of the leadership team has been seconded from another school until Easter 2014.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You, your senior leaders and members of the governing body have taken effective action to ensure that those areas that were identified as weaknesses at the previous section 5 inspection are being addressed quickly. Senior leaders now have a much clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, some leaders are new in post and have not yet had sufficient time yet to demonstrate the impact of their actions. Line management structures have also improved. This has led to greater accountability and better development opportunities for middle leaders. Although developing well, the quality of middle leadership is currently too variable.

The senior leadership team is committed, cohesive and shares a clear vision about what needs to be done to improve the academy rapidly and sustainably. This vision has been shared successfully with staff and students. The academy's ethos is changing quickly, as are its core values. Students look smarter and, in general, conduct themselves more maturely. The recently launched anti-bullying 'pledge' is helping students to take more responsibility for their actions. Consequently, students say that bullying is now uncommon and, where issues arise, there is someone there to help them. Staff and students are now prouder of the academy, and relationships are more respectful and productive. As a result, behaviour in lessons and around the school is much better than at the time of the section 5 inspection.

Your improvement plans are more sharply focused on those actions that are most likely to bring about quick improvement. There is now a regular cycle of formal monitoring, with six key check points during the year. These improved systems enable you and your leaders to evaluate the impact of your work more rigorously.

Overall, systems for gathering information about students' progress have improved. This means that leaders and governors have a more reliable view of students' achievement. Nevertheless, teachers' checks on students' progress in some subject areas are inconsistent.

The governing body has also been restructured. Governors' roles and responsibilities now align closely with those of the senior leaders. This means that governors are better placed to support and challenge the academy about all aspects of its work. Members of the governing body have a range of skills but have rightly identified their own further training and development as a priority.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Students reported that instances of bullying had reduced noticeably since last year. They trust academy staff to act quickly to sort out issues when they arise. Surveys of students' opinions carried out by the academy support this view. The most common types of bullying described by students related to name-calling and unkind teasing. Leaders are working hard to ensure these forms of bullying reduce further.
- There have been improvements to behaviour across the academy. Leaders are ensuring that the culture of the academy community changes and that 'new traditions' emerge that set a higher standard for expected behaviour amongst current and future cohorts.
- There are clearer rules that teachers and students understand. These are being applied more consistently. This means that disruptions to learning in lessons are less frequent and incidences of poor behaviour are followed up more quickly.
- Students feel safer in those areas of the academy campus that were identified as problematic at the time of the last section 5 inspection.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is more consistent than at the time of the section 5 inspection. Teachers now plan their lessons in a similar way. They are better prepared and, as a consequence, lessons generally start promptly and proceed at a brisk pace.
- In general, teachers have higher expectations. They are making better use of information about students' prior attainment to organise groupings and plan lessons that are more challenging and meet their students' broad needs. Consequently, the progress made by students in their learning is improving steadily.
- Students said that lessons are now more 'fun', especially when teachers plan practical or varied approaches to learning. These approaches help them to become more engaged. For example, one Year 8 pupil said that they had

enjoyed using both film clips and different types of text to evaluate the reliability of sources that refer to the ancient city of Troy.

- There are clear policies in place for staff and students to follow that relate to improving presentation. Sensible plans are in place to ensure that in the future all subject areas display high-quality examples of work in classrooms. Regular 'Drop Everything and Read' sessions are beginning to promote better attitudes to reading. Nevertheless, these whole-school strategies are new and will take time to embed and develop before leaders can evaluate their impact.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The quality of teaching is improving but at a slower rate than other areas of the academy's work. This is because leaders have rightly focused on improving the behaviour and safety of students as a priority.
- There is too much variation in the way teachers use information about students' prior learning to plan lessons that meet the needs of students of different abilities. Consequently, some lessons lack challenge. In these lessons, students' progress is too slow.
- In some lessons, students are too passive. Students engage with the tasks that they have been set but are not always given opportunities to contribute actively or complete work fully.
- Although behaviour has improved, students report that in a minority of lessons their learning is disrupted by low-level poor behaviour, such as shouting out or students being silly. They also say that some teachers do not yet apply the behaviour policy, which they understand and like, as consistently as the majority.
- Younger students say that the behaviour of some older students is often inconsiderate or overly physical. There have been improvements, particularly in Year 11, but older students have yet to fully take on their responsibilities as role models.
- Although there have been steady improvements in attendance, this remains a priority for further improvement. Leaders are not yet making full use of the information they have about the attendance of different groups of students to evaluate the impact of their actions.

External support

The academy makes effective use of external support. The executive headteacher successfully brokers support from the wider academy chain and beyond. He provides the acting Principal and the leadership team with professional support and offers incisive challenge that has strengthened their self-evaluation. Support from the

academy sponsor's advisers has been well focused and proportionate. Other external consultants are being used effectively, for example, to develop the skills of middle leaders and teachers. But this work is at an early stage. Leaders and the governing body will need to evaluate the impact of the support that the academy receives to ensure that it is all of an equally high standard.