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29 November 2013

Mr P Hyde  
Headteacher  
Alcester Academy  
Gerard Road  
Alcester  
Warwickshire  
B49 6QQ

Dear Mr Hyde

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Alcester Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 28 November 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 academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 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 academy should take further action to:

- ensure that all teachers' marking gives students precise guidance about how to improve their work especially in science, humanities and design technology
- accelerate the rate of progress of Year 11 students eligible for the pupil premium grant, especially in mathematics
- accelerate the rate of progress of students in all year groups who are disabled or who have special educational needs, especially in English and mathematics
- ensure governors hold all school leaders to account for the progress and attainment of students

## **Evidence**

During the visit I met with you, other academy leaders and four members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. You showed me around the academy and visits were made to lessons in Year 11 art, Year 9 English and Year 10 mathematics to observe students' learning and to look at the work in their books. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's information about students' progress, the school improvement plans, minutes of the governing body and a selection of appraisal documents. I also undertook an extensive work scrutiny with two members of the leadership team.

## **Context**

Since the inspection in September, you have been appointed as the permanent headteacher. Changes were made to the structure of the leadership team at the beginning of September 2013.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher, academy leaders and the governing body acted quickly to address the issues for improvement identified in the recent inspection. Academy leaders are taking appropriate and effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning and increase the rate of students' progress. Existing good practice within the academy has been shared more widely and extensive personalised training, including coaching, has been provided for all staff including teaching assistants. The academy marking policy has been revised and as a result teachers are better at letting students know precisely what to do to improve their work and students stated that this is helping them make progress. However, as a result of the work scrutiny it was apparent that the quality of marking is inconsistent across subjects and individual teachers especially in science, humanities and design technology.

The headteacher has made appropriate use of human resource procedures for dealing with underperforming staff and expectations have been strongly reinforced. Academy leaders now make staff feel far more accountable for the progress students make in lessons through a robust use of students' progress data. Frequent tracking of student progress enables the academy to employ effective interventions and support for students not making expected progress. As a result, progress can be seen for the majority of students in most of the subjects. However, the latest information provided by the academy shows that students eligible for the pupil premium grant in Year 11 are not making as much progress as other students in mathematics. In addition, students in all year groups who are disabled or who have special educational needs do not make as much progress as other students in English and mathematics.

Governors meet regularly to discuss the progress and attainment of students and are fully supportive of academy leaders. However, governors are not able to ask

searching questions of school leaders and do not always understand the data that is presented to them and rely on school leaders for interpretation.

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 working successfully with local outstanding schools to improve the quality of teaching through extensive training and support packages that are personalised to meet the needs of individual staff.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Warwickshire and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**