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18 December 2013

Ms Nancy Robinson
Principal
Ipswich Academy
Brasiers Wood Road
Ipswich
IP3 0SP

Dear Ms Robinson

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Ipswich Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 17 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in July 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the Chair and other members of the Academy Council, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Learning Schools Trust. We visited a small number of lessons together briefly to see how well students were learning and looked at some of their work. I also evaluated the sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the academy has moved into its new building. You have appointed a replacement Associate Principal, a new College Principal for Key Stage 3, and a new Director of English with responsibility for literacy. The Trust appointed a new Chief Executive Officer with effect from October 2013.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Your academy action plan clearly reflects your high expectations for the future development of the academy. You have identified key dates during the year when you aim to review progress against the plan. Although the plan identifies targets for the end of the year, it is not always clear what constitutes good progress leading up to these final targets. You and your senior leaders have started to raise teachers' expectations and students' aspirations about what can be achieved in the academy, but this is at an early stage. You are working with an identified group of 45 higher-attaining students in Year 11 to raise their aspirations and improve their self-esteem. Classroom teachers now have available key information on students' prior attainment and what they are expected to achieve. You now analyse students' progress through a range of monitoring activities, and look more closely at the progress made by different groups of students. Teachers' assessments of students' progress and current attainment have been inaccurate in the past, and you are starting to develop teachers' understanding and confidence in forecasting more accurate outcomes. You acknowledge this process will take some time.

You recognise the need to develop students' literacy skills and have nominated a senior leader to be responsible for reviewing literacy provision, which has resulted in a new literacy plan. You are developing the role of form tutors so that they a greater part in monitoring students' academic progress.

You have targeted various groups of staff who meet fortnightly and you are working with them to develop their leadership and teaching skills. Your latest monitoring activities indicate the proportion of good and better teaching is steadily increasing. However, too much teaching still requires improvement and a small proportion is inadequate. The quality of leadership at subject level remains inconsistent at this stage, particularly in the interpretation of information on students' progress.

The academy council has analysed the last set of examination results and has reviewed the academy's progress towards achieving the goals set out in your action plan. Some members took part in a two-day review of teaching arranged by the Trust which involved observing nearly every teacher, and coaching members of the senior leadership team in giving better feedback to their colleagues about the quality of teaching observed. Members of the academy council have started to conduct focused visits to the academy which are followed up by written notes with points for action.

The Learning Schools Trust is providing an effective level of support and challenge. It has produced a statement of action. The statement of action does not indicate clearly enough how the Trust's actions link to the academy action plan, although actions taken to date have had a clear impact, and monitoring procedures appear to be rigorous. The statement of action does not make any reference to arrangements for informing registered parents of the proposed actions or how the Trust will gather

the views of parents. The Trust has made good use of its other schools to work with the academy's leaders in the sharing of good practice.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

The sponsor's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Academy Council, the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk, the Education Funding Agency, the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit and the Chief Executive Officer of the Learning Schools Trust. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector