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Nick Jones
Principal
Twickenham Academy
Percy Road
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Dear Mr Jones

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Twickenham Academy

Following my visit to your school on 24 January 2014, 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 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 November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, the academy council and the sponsor are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The academy should take immediate action to:

- sharpen its activity plan by including measureable success criteria and realistic deadlines against which leaders and others can monitor and evaluate its impact
- improve the direction given to leaders and staff so they are able to implement change methodically and quickly
- hold staff more accountable for improving the quality of their teaching
- ensure all staff have accurate information which they can use to plan lessons and track students' progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other leaders, a group of teachers, an academy council member, and the Chief Executive of the Academy Trust, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I visited lessons with you to speak with students and scrutinise their work. I evaluated the academy activity plan and reviewed other relevant documents including academy council minutes.

Context

Since the last inspection, eight teachers joined the academy and ten left, including the acting Associate Principal, the mathematics, and the language and communication (English) programme leaders. Mathematics is now led by an acting programme leader and English by a member of the senior team. The acting Associate Principal's responsibilities have been re-allocated to senior team members. The academy council does not have a substantive Chair and the academy trust is in the process of appointing a new Principal by Easter 2014.

Main findings

You have revised your academy activity plan to include areas identified to improve in the last inspection. The plan outlines the appropriate actions and the staff responsible to implement and monitor them. Nonetheless, it lacks sufficient detail for leaders to hold staff to account. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation are not precise enough. Key performance indicators are not always measurable and there is a lack of interim success criteria to check the impact of the plan at short intervals. Deadlines are not always specific and in some cases lack the urgency required to bring about rapid improvement.

You, your senior team and middle leaders have begun to implement new initiatives to try to influence change. However, the speed of change is slow. This is because you have not given leaders sufficient direction so they are clear about what you expect of them. Leaders are also not always clear about how to hold staff to account for implementing change. For example, teachers receiving support to develop their classroom practice are not given specific guidelines about when improvement is expected.

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have delivered two training sessions for staff on different aspects of teaching. However, this has not focussed on the key issues recommended to improve teaching from the last inspection report. As a consequence, inconsistencies in teachers' practice and students' learning remain.

The action taken to improve the quality of teachers' marking and students' responses has been slow and they remain variable across the academy. Students'

work indicates that the academy's marking policy is not being implemented consistently.

Senior leaders have very recently started to check the accuracy of information about students' achievement and created a new data context sheet to provide staff with this information. Middle leaders for English, mathematics and science have attended a newly introduced 'raising achievement meeting' with senior leaders to discuss the students' progress in these subjects and to identify any additional support.

A key area for improvement in the last inspection was to ensure all staff are able to access and use reliable information about students' achievement to improve lesson planning. The action taken by the academy to improve this has been too slow, because information has not been available for some staff until this week; some teachers have not received it yet. New software to help teachers access information about students' achievement has not yet been put into place. This delay shows the lack of urgency.

The sixth form leader is beginning to effectively address the areas required to improve teaching and learning in the sixth form. She has quickly introduced a new analysis tool to track students' achievement. She attends the local authority's sixth-form group to discuss strategies to improve the sixth-form provision with leaders from other local schools. This has led to opportunities for sixth-form teachers to attend subject-specific training to improve their practice.

The academy council has met once since the last inspection to discuss the activity plan. The Chief Executive is encouraging members to be more involved in evaluating the impact of the plan. Due to the slow progress to date, he is planning to introduce monthly instead of termly review meetings. This is to ensure key members of the academy board and the academy council can assess the impact the activity plan more frequently and challenge academy leaders appropriately.

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

Since January 2014, the academy's director of learning has supported senior leaders to try to supply staff with accurate student achievement information to help them improve the quality of teaching. An external advisor has visited the school twice to consult with you and members of the senior team. However, this has had limited impact.

I am copying this letter to the Executive Chair of the Learning Schools Trust, the Education Funding Agency, the Academies' Advisers Unit at the Department for Education, and the Director of Children's Services for Richmond upon Thames.

Yours sincerely

Pamela Fearnley
Her Majesty's Inspector