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Mr Haroon Hussain
Acting Principal
Kings Science Academy
Northside Road
Lidget Green
Bradford
BD7 2AN

Dear Mr Hussain

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kings Science Academy, Bradford

Following my visit to your school with Helen Storey Senior HMI on 10 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. Thank you for the help you gave us and for the time you and your senior colleagues made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and at the previous section 8 monitoring inspection. The academy should take immediate action to:

- Secure additional, experienced leadership capacity at the most senior level.
- establish key priorities to move the academy to good or better within the next two to three terms, including:
 - developing a curriculum for Key Stage 4 which has sufficient breadth and balance to meet the needs of all students and enable them to progress successfully to the next stage of their education
 - recruiting sufficient high-quality, experienced teachers to deliver the curriculum
 - developing rigorous systems to hold teachers to account for students' performance
 - adopting robust procedures for dealing with teaching which is not good enough.
- Draw up and implement development plans to deliver the academy's key priorities. These should include clear, quantifiable success criteria and milestones against which improvement can be measured.

Evidence

During the visit meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, to discuss the action taken both since the last section 5 inspection and since the first monitoring inspection. Parts of six lessons were observed jointly with senior and middle leaders. A range of documentation was reviewed including recent summaries of students' progress, attendance data, information about exclusions, the academy's self-review and its action plan.

Context

The Principal is currently absent long term: his role is being covered by a Vice-Principal. In September 2013, to provide for an additional year group, 29 teachers joined the staff, 19 of whom were either newly qualified or trainees. The head of mathematics left at the end of the autumn term to take up a post elsewhere. This role is being covered internally. The academy now employs a small number of teaching assistants.

Main findings

In recent weeks senior leaders, working very closely with the Chair of the Governing Body, have accelerated the academy's development. They have correctly identified a number of significant areas on which both strategic and operational decisions are required but have yet to prioritise these and plan fully how best to move forward. Nonetheless, some significant decisions have been implemented. For example, wisely, plans for entering Year 9 students for GCSE examinations in biology and chemistry have been reconsidered.

Governance is improving. Following training, the governing body, now at full complement, has established sub-committees and structures for decision-making are in place. However, only the Chair has expertise in education and he is currently bearing very considerable responsibilities for finance and staff management which would usually be carried by a school's most senior leaders and managers.

Procedures are in place for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning regularly. A range of appropriate methods are used including lesson observations and scrutinies of students' work. However, until very recently the academy has not had in place procedures for dealing with teaching which is persistently inadequate. Through learning walks and lesson observations during this inspection it was apparent that too much emphasis is placed on gaining knowledge and insufficient attention given to checking students' understanding. In their desire to succeed, students are reluctant to admit when they are struggling with their work. In promoting an aspirational culture, the academy has not developed an approach in which students are fully comfortable to acknowledge when they need help and ask for it.

There are regular discussions between senior and middle leaders about the quality of provision and students' performance in subjects. However, the procedures for these are not systematic enough to ensure that middle leaders are held fully to account. Additionally, the academy's reduced capacity at senior leadership level means that

such a system is placing demands on senior leaders which are difficult for them to meet.

Students' attendance is above the national average, although this comparator includes Years 10 and 11. There has been a very significant reduction in both fixed-term and permanent exclusions, indicating that students' behaviour and the academy's management of this have improved. Only three days were lost to learning in the autumn term 2013 compared with 39 days in the same period in 2012.

Senior leaders recognise the importance of liaison with parents to ensure that students succeed and so have recently appointed a parental engagement worker. They are responding to feedback from parents and students and have decided to increase the number of vocational courses available to students at Key Stage 4 by, for instance, the addition of business studies. There are also plans for a broader range of science qualifications to be offered to students. However, a coherent plan for the Key Stage 4 curriculum is not in place and so decisions about recruiting staff for the coming academic year are tardy.

Ofsted will carry out further visits and provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

There has been a considerable increase in the links the academy has with other schools and academy groups. Having joined the Bradford Partnership, it is benefiting from their system of regular whole-school reviews. A link with an academy chain is enabling Kings to provide the range of support required for the considerable proportion of staff who are newly qualified teachers. Through the local authority, the academy is drawing on the expertise of specialist leaders in education who are helping staff accurately to assess students' work in various subjects. Very recently, the governing body has appointed a School Improvement Partner to support and challenge senior leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector