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Tom Waterworth
Principal
All Saints Academy Dunstable
Houghton Road
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Dear Mr Waterworth

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to All Saints Academy Dunstable

Following my visit to your academy on 4 March 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 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 November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and sponsors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in November 2013. The academy should take further action to:

- ensure teachers in all subjects take action to develop students' literacy, especially their understanding of the technical vocabulary essential for the topic being studied
- make more effective use of the data you are gathering on students' progress to evaluate the impact of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those eligible for the Pupil Premium funding
- improve the quality of the academy improvement plan by building in clearer, more measurable criteria for checking that improvement strategies are having the intended impact, and improvement is sufficiently rapid.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, students, representatives of the governing body and of the sponsors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the academy improvement plan prior to the visit and discussed it with you. We visited a range of lessons together and I visited several others alone to look at how well teachers were planning their lessons, how well they were marking students' work and how interested and engaged students are in the activities. I scrutinised a number of documents you provided on the outcomes of monitoring activities and the progress students are making currently.

Main findings

You have split the combined department of English and modern languages so leaders can focus on their subjects more closely. This is having a positive impact on students' progress in English. More students are making accelerated progress this year. The same level of improvement is not yet evident in modern languages.

You have taken a logical, phased approach to improvement strategies, starting with improving the use you make of data. You have created a simple but flexible system for recording and analysing data on students' progress and have started to use the information to set more aspirational targets for students, to hold teachers and subject leaders to account and to help students to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next. You are not yet using the data on the progress that disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making to check that their achievement is improving in line with other groups. The same applies to the progress of students for whom the academy receives the Pupil Premium funding.

Regular line management meetings focus on students' progress. Subject leaders have to show that they are monitoring teaching closely and can provide evidence of the impact of their work. As a result, students report that teaching is more engaging and lessons more consistently meet their needs. The visits to lessons confirmed that teachers are planning their lessons carefully and devising activities that will support different groups to meet the objective of the lesson. A weaker aspect of the planning is that teachers are not considering how they can support students' literacy skills in their lesson. In particular, they do not always check whether all students have understood the key words for that topic and this can slow progress.

A major improvement has been in the quality of teachers' marking. I saw some outstanding examples, where a dialogue developed between teacher and student leading to big improvements in subsequent work. You are checking that teachers are applying the marking policy and taking prompt action if not.

You have created an improvement plan that focuses on the areas for development from the last inspection. The actions identified are clear and set in an appropriate timescale. The weakness of the plan is that it lacks measurable criteria by which you will evaluate the success you are having at various stages and check that you are on track to move to good by the next inspection.

The members of the governing body and the representatives of the sponsors continue to use their wide range of knowledge and expertise to support and challenge you and the other academy leaders well.

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

You are benefitting from good support from an external consultant funded by the governing body. You are working collaboratively with the local authority to manage the growth of the academy and the change of provision from two to three key stages. The link with the university sponsor is proving beneficial in raising students' expectations and encouraging them to aim high.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Central Bedfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector