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16 June 2014

Mr K Mackey
Headteacher
Droylsden Academy
Manor Road
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Greater Manchester
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Dear Mr Mackey

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Droylsden Academy

Following my visit to your school on 13 June 2014, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in March 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, one of the vice-Principals, the Chair of the Governing Body, who is also a representative of the sponsor, and one other governor. I also met with four curriculum leaders and a group of students. I accompanied you on a tour of the academy and evaluated the sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan.

Context

There have been no key changes to staffing since the section 5 inspection which judged the academy to have serious weaknesses.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The inspection report stated that you had already made significant improvements in the short space of time since you had been in post. It is clear that the strong, focused leadership provided by you and your team has enabled this pace of change to continue. The comprehensive action plan provides a clear rationale and route map to bring about further and sustained improvement in all areas of the academy.

You have raised expectations both of and for staff and students and they have responded well. The curriculum leaders I spoke with feel both challenged and supported. The new structures and procedures, such as the three-weekly line management meetings, have brought about greater responsibility and accountability for all staff. As one curriculum leader put it, 'If things aren't happening, it will be challenged.' They value this and feel they are now able to carry out their leadership roles more effectively.

Further evidence of how you are taking the whole academy community with you comes from my discussion with students. They are unanimous in their support of the changes you have made. They speak positively about improvements in behaviour, in particular the calmer atmosphere and the greater emphasis on respect. Although students do still experience disruption to their learning in some lessons, they say this has improved significantly. A few younger students are frustrated that some teachers do not use the behaviour system effectively. The development of the provision in the inclusion area, which offers personalised support to students, has contributed to the reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions. The continued improvement in attendance figures is a real success story. The attendance of all groups of students is above the national group average. The priority for senior leaders now is to close any within-school gaps between these different groups.

Data on students' achievement, which are collected every half term, are transparent and accessible for all staff. This robust system provides an excellent tool for rigorous line management. The most recent data indicate that the attainment and progress of students in Year 11 will be a significant improvement on last year. Also, attainment and progress gaps between those students supported by the pupil premium and their peers are set to narrow.

As the inspection report stated, the governors took decisive action when students' achievement started to fall. Along with the sponsors, they are holding the new senior leadership team to account. Governors rigorously and systematically monitor the progress of the action plan through the curriculum and quality standards committee and the full governing body meeting. The sponsor's statement of action states the part it will play in monitoring and evaluating the actions of senior leaders to ensure that the pace of improvement continues. The academy's English department is benefiting from support from the local authority's Performance and Standards Strategic Lead for English. The report of her last visit outlines the progress made over recent months within the department and the plans for ongoing support.

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 fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne

Her Majesty's Inspector