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Ms K Stonier
Headteacher
Ringmer Community College
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Dear Ms Stonier

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ringmer Community College

Following my visit to your academy on 20 June 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 April 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Academy leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- establish systems to hold teachers and leaders at all levels accountable for the achievement of all groups of students
- visit good and outstanding schools to learn how they have supported students' high levels of achievement, motivation for learning and attendance
- undertake an audit of the governing body's strengths and development needs.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you and other senior leaders, the Chair of Governors and two other governors, and a National Leader of Education (NLE) who is also a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the academy improvement plan and scrutinised other documents including the academy's self-evaluation. We visited some lessons briefly, to see teaching and learning.

Main findings

You and your senior team's grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy has become much clearer recently. You now have a good understanding of the actions required to improve the achievement of students, and you have summarised these well in your development plan. There is also an emerging appreciation of the need to continually measure the effectiveness of all of these actions by checking how they improve the progress being made by groups of students.

It is appropriate that current systems to monitor students' achievements are being improved and centralised with this aim in mind; senior leaders will be able to check more quickly and easily how well students are doing in each subject. This work is led well by the senior Vice Principal. The need to ensure that regular use is made of current achievement data by all members of the senior team and learning leaders was discussed. A good first step is to strengthen the ways in which the two Vice Principals are working together on the day-to-day use of this information.

The individual plans being drawn up to support every teacher's work recognise existing strengths and also particular training needs. In response, training is now being tailored to meet individuals' specific needs. This combination of better data about how well students are doing and more targeted improvements in the quality of teaching now need to be brought together in high quality and frequent meetings about students' achievement. In doing so, you can strengthen the lines of accountability from you, through the work of senior leaders and learning leaders, into every classroom. This will help you to bring about the improvements detailed in your development plan, such as accelerating the progress made by students eligible for the pupil premium, and disabled students and those with special educational needs. You recognise the benefits to be gained from visiting local good and outstanding schools to acquire a clearer sense of how this can happen well here, and your NLE is keen to support you.

Pastoral care is a strength of the academy and it is entirely appropriate that all of your improvement plans are aimed at maintaining this, while supporting much higher expectations of students and teachers. You recognise that students are willing and ready to learn, but many lack ambition and they need to become more self-

motivated by being convinced of the joys of learning and the opportunities that further and higher education give them to enrich their lives. You do not underestimate the extent of the culture change required in the academy to achieve this.

You are very conscious of the need to improve attendance, and one of your Assistant Principals is using a range of strategies to do this. Current trends are positive. Improvements brought about so far need to be built on, and strategies developed that promote a high level of awareness of the importance of good attendance to convince the minority of parents and students who do not yet cooperate.

Governors are keen to work with you to bring about the changes required. They show dedication and have good skills and experience to bring to this task. They recognise the need to undertake a full audit of their strengths and development needs in order to prepare themselves to rise to this challenge.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Links with the local authority are becoming more productive. You are beginning to work closely with your local authority appointed NLE, the headteacher of a neighbouring school, who can broker support across schools. He has already established useful links between the English department and Uplands Community College. You also value the structure provided by the local authority to enable your Assistant Principal with responsibility for the sixth form to meet and exchange ideas with other heads of sixth forms locally. Your new links with Roedean School also have the capacity to enrich aspects of sixth form provision.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex, the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector