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Robin Fugill
Principal
Arnold Hill Academy
Gedling Road
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Nottingham
NG5 6NZ

Dear Mr Fugill

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Arnold Hill Academy

Following my visit to your school on 4 July 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 school's most recent section 5 inspection.

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

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the head of school, the Vice-Chair and two other members of the Governing Body. During a tour of the academy, I spoke with your vice-principals about their role in school improvement. I scrutinised some students' workbooks and spoke briefly and informally with a few students about their school experience. I evaluated the academy's improvement plans, the governors' statement of action and students' assessment information.

Context

There have been no significant staffing changes since the section 5 inspection. Four new parent governors have been recruited onto the governing body. Academy leaders are in the final stages of discussions with the Department for Education about the planning of a new site for the upper school, which is due to be opened in September 2016.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You and your senior leaders have wasted no time in refocusing their improvement planning to specifically address the areas for improvement set out in the section 5 inspection report. The plans rightly focus on improving the quality of teaching across the academy in order to raise achievement. There are sharp success criteria and appropriate milestones by which progress can be checked by governors and external partners. The plans, however, do not make clear the distinction between monitoring and evaluation activities, and the role of governors in monitoring the work of the school is not clearly set out. Systems and meeting structures set up to monitor closely students' assessment data, such as the 'management updates meeting' (MUM), have been sharpened up, allowing leaders to hold teachers to account more rigorously. Continuous professional development activities across the year, and particularly since the section 5 inspection, have seen a direct impact on improved outcomes for students across the academy, especially in English and mathematics. Reliable academy predictions indicate that current Year 11 students will exceed national expectations for progress in both English and mathematics; English results are set to be much improved compared to previous years. A whole-school drive to focus on progress rather than attainment has meant that outcomes for students in subjects other than mathematics and English are also improving.

As a result of a thorough review of students' performance data and other monitoring information about the quality of teaching, leaders have put together a series of specific training and development sessions to further drive improvements. For example, work to improve behaviour management skills by teachers has resulted in more positive attitudes from students in the classroom; academy surveys in Key Stage 4 indicate that students say that behaviour in their lessons is good. Leaders of teaching and learning have improved the range of information they use to judge the quality of teaching, giving them a better overview of typical teaching by individual teachers. This approach has improved further the academy's performance management process.

Governors have taken bold and urgent steps to improve their role and impact on academy improvement. As a direct result of the section 5 inspection, a full review of governance has been undertaken as well as a reconstitution of the governing body. This has resulted in more focused committees with the aim of holding academy leaders to account more rigorously and effectively. New additions to the governing body this term have brought valuable drive and ambition to the role played by governors; this is already sharpening up the level of challenge it provides to academy leaders. For example, the 'cabinet', a new committee set up to scrutinise performance data fortnightly, has rightly questioned academy leaders' presentation of data regarding the performance of those students eligible for pupil premium government funding. This improved level of scrutiny and challenge demonstrates a marked improvement in the quality of governance compared to last year. However, the governors' current statement of action to accompany the academy improvement plan is not good enough. The timeframes and level of detail, in particular with regard

to engaging parents and financially resourcing the academy action plan, are not appropriate. This is because, when the statement of action was written, a review of governance and subsequent restructure had not yet taken place.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose

The governors' statement of action is not fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit, the Education Funding Agency, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector