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Mr Pat Rice
Principal
Cedar Mount Academy
Gorton Education Village
50 Wembley Road
Gorton
Manchester
M18 7DT

Dear Mr Rice

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cedar Mount Academy, Manchester

Following my visit to your school on 11 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school 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.

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

- ensure that teachers benefit from even more opportunities to observe and share good practice in teaching and learning both within the academy and in other good and outstanding schools
- sharpen the action plan so that the impact of actions taken by leaders can be evaluated in terms of improvements in students' progress.

Evidence

During the inspection I held meetings with the Principal, senior leaders, the chair of governors and the Chief Executive Officer of Bright Future Educational Trust to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a group of Year 10

students and teachers, some of whom hold leadership responsibilities. The academy's action plan was evaluated. I scrutinised a range of other documentation provided by the school, including a sample of students' work.

Context

Since the last inspection in April 2014, a new Principal, appointed prior to the inspection, has taken up post. Although there have been no other significant changes to staff since the inspection, nine teachers plan to leave at the end of August 2014. Leaders have already appointed teachers to replace all those leaving, with effect from September 2014.

Main findings

Leaders have taken decisive action to raise expectations and improve the quality of teaching as a means of accelerating the rate at which all students make progress. Learning areas are bright and welcoming and examples of students' work are displayed prominently in many classrooms and on some corridors. Students' behaviour has improved. Evidence in the form of the academy's own records shows that the number of serious incidents has reduced since the inspection. Students look smart, they are polite and courteous to visitors and those spoken with are proud to be students at the academy.

Leaders' records show that teaching has improved since the inspection. Evidence of this improvement can be seen in students' work books. For example, when marking students' work, some teachers set additional tasks to challenge students to think more deeply about what they have learned. All of the students spoken with said that this type of marking by teachers is helping them to make progress at a faster rate than before the inspection. However, as the students rightly identified, the quality of teachers' marking is not yet consistently good and this is hindering improvements in the rate at which progress improves overall.

The academy has started to make more effective use of links with the co-located Melland School in order to increase the pace of progress made by less able students. Learning from joint training for staff of both schools; on dyslexia, autism and the preferred learning styles of students, is already being implemented by some teachers of Cedar Mount. For example a teacher of English has improved her planning by ensuring activities in her lessons are better suited to the needs of individuals. Evidence in a group of Year 9 students' work books demonstrated that they can convey convincingly their understanding of Blood Brothers. These students made use of story boards, rather than text alone, to communicate their ideas. This represents a substantial improvement in their ability to apply their learning confidently and successfully when compared to their level of skills before the inspection.

By being increasingly prominent around the school, leaders and staff have taken swift and effective action to improve students' punctuality to lessons. Staff challenge promptly any student who is not in class and ensure disruption to learning, associated with the late arrival of students, is kept to a minimum. Teachers now routinely meet and greet students as they arrive at their classroom and as a result more students make progress throughout the whole of the lesson. Behaviour throughout the school and particularly in lessons has improved. As a consequence, there are fewer distractions in lessons.

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

Leaders have made effective use of their links with other outstanding schools within the Bright Futures Educational Trust. A shared approach to staff training has resulted in the quality of teaching improving because more teachers plan their lessons effectively in order to meet the needs of all students. Middle leaders and consequently their students, have started to benefit from observing and sharing the high quality practice of staff at an outstanding school. This has already led to improvements in mathematics with the academy's own data predicting a seven per cent increase in the proportion of students achieving higher grades compared to last year.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and as below.

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk] - for academies, free schools, UTCs and studio schools