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Gordon Inglis
The Bolsover School
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Bolsover
Chesterfield
S44 6XA

Dear Mr Inglis

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Bolsover School

Following my visit to your school on 22 September 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 June 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:

- increase rates of progress, particularly in English and mathematics
- ensure governors are involved in monitoring and/or evaluating actions in the academy's development plan
- ensure an external review of governance is undertaken this term
- amend the academy action plan, ensuring it lists specific dates and the individuals responsible for monitoring and evaluating actions, so that impact can be judged more clearly.

Evidence

Meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, and three representatives of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I had a telephone conversation with your school improvement adviser. I evaluated your

academy improvement plan. You took me on a tour of the school and we saw the learning that took place in several classrooms.

Context

13 teachers have left the school since your recent inspection. 13 new teachers have joined the school, including a deputy headteacher and leaders with responsibility for geography and history. Leaders with responsibility for English, mathematics, science and humanities now have positions as assistant headteachers to reflect their important roles in improving the academy.

Main findings

The achievement of the academy's Year 11 students who left the school in 2014 was well below expectations in several subjects, including English and mathematics. This means that the academy requires a faster rate of improvement to become good at the time of its next inspection.

A deputy headteacher joined the academy late in the summer term. A Specialist Leader of Education, he has been instrumental in making substantial changes to a wide range of the academy's practices with the aim of significantly improving the quality of teaching. As a result, members of staff have undertaken training on several of the school's key areas for development, including giving effective feedback and asking thought-provoking questions.

The calendar of quality assurance activities has been completely revised. It is now more rigorous and gives more prominence to student voice and to the achievement of groups of students, including those eligible for pupil premium funding and the most-able.

You now have higher expectations of your teachers and senior leaders have a clearer system of holding them to account for the achievement of their students. You have established bespoke professional development programmes for teachers. Two teachers are scheduled to attend a course on outstanding teaching. Three teachers began the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership this month and two teachers began the equivalent qualification for senior leaders. All teachers who request it can have a timetabled lesson which they use to observe the good teaching practice which takes place in the academy. Teachers who have taken advantage of this opportunity speak positively of it and feel it has given them new ideas for their own teaching.

You have extended these higher expectations to students. All students have had assemblies on the importance of making good progress, and they have had their targets explained to them. You are encouraging students to improve the presentation of their work, and there is an agreed format for this which is in

students' revised planners. Senior leaders are holding teachers to account for this as part of the academy's quality assurance process.

You now expect all teachers to use a new 'common feedback form' which gives students detailed information on how they can improve their work. Although the form is common, it does allow for subject-specific foci, such as in mathematics. Time for students to reflect on the feedback they receive is now a requirement of lesson planning. Early work scrutinies indicate that this approach is having a positive impact.

The system senior leaders have for tracking student progress is now being used to better effect. Senior leaders are now more informed about the progress of groups. Further, teachers use this information to develop individual support programmes for students at risk of underachievement.

You have extended the school timetable between Monday and Thursday. Students are invited to support groups for a variety of subjects and this includes opportunities for the academy's most-able students. Senior leaders have arranged free buses to assist students in attending; early take up of these extra sessions has been good.

Improving behaviour for learning is a focus, as reflected by changes made to the details of what is reported to parents; this aspect is now more high-profile in students' reports. Senior leaders have made behaviour expectations clearer to teachers. Early impact is shown by a reduced number of in-school exclusions.

Governors met shortly after the academy's recent inspection to discuss the findings. They are aware of the academy's areas for development and rightly view improving the quality and consistency of teaching as the main priority. At the time of the inspection, governors had agreed to arrange an external review of governance. This has yet to take place and, therefore, no impact can be judged. This should be arranged as a priority. The link governor for disabled students and those with special educational needs has met with the academy leader responsible for this area in order to monitor student progress. This governor plans to take part in lesson observations so she can be more informed about students' experiences of the academy. Governors have discussed the academy's development plan. However, they are not as fully involved in the plan as they need to be; governors should be more involved in the monitoring and/or evaluation of the actions taking place to improve the academy. Three governors have left since the recent inspection; two new governors have been recruited.

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 work with an experienced educational consultant who acts as the academy's school improvement adviser. He visits the school on a half-termly basis. He met with you at the beginning of September to review examination results and he offered his advice on the academy's development plan. This visit was very recent and no impact of this can be judged.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector