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16 September 2014

Mr Damian Owen
Principal
Manchester Health Academy
Moor Road
Wythenshawe
Greater Manchester
M23 9BP

Dear Mr Owen

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Manchester Health Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 15 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in November 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Barkway
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good and so all groups of students, especially those who are supported through the pupil premium, make at least good progress across all subjects and key stages, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use the available information about how well students are achieving to provide activities which engage well and meet the needs of all students
 - ensuring that the strategies for improving the literacy and communication skills of students are consistently applied by all teachers and embedded across all subjects, and that all teachers have high expectations of how students should present their work
 - ensuring that teachers direct the work of teaching assistants effectively, so that lower-ability students make good progress
 - ensuring that teachers use questioning effectively to check students' learning and challenge their thinking
 - raising students' self-esteem and confidence so that they are more involved in, and responsible for, their own learning by providing them with more opportunities to work independently
 - providing opportunities for students to respond to teachers' marking and feedback
 - ensuring that opportunities are taken to share the good and outstanding practice in the academy.

- Reduce further the rates of student exclusions so that they are at least in line with national averages.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that all improvement actions are closely monitored to check that they are having the desired impact
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve by embedding the new target-setting systems, and ensuring the accuracy of the data collected by teachers
 - broadening the range of evidence which leaders take into account when making judgements about the quality of teaching, to include scrutiny of students' work and evidence of students' achievement
 - embedding the new line-management structures and strategies so that senior leaders are effective in holding teachers and middle leaders to account
 - ensuring that governors have sufficient information to monitor the impact of performance management targets and of the pupil premium funding
 - undertaking an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 15 September 2014

Evidence

The inspector met with the Principal, members of the senior leadership team, the literacy coordinator and the manager of literacy intervention, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Vice Chair, the Chair of the Governors' Standards Committee and representatives from the local authority. The inspector also carried out a learning walk, during which she observed aspects of teaching, talked to students and looked at a sample of students' work in books. In addition, the inspector looked at academy documentation, including information about students' progress, the self-evaluation summary, progress against the academy's development plan and the academy's central record of checks on staff.

Context

Since the last inspection, the number of students on roll has increased significantly and the academy is now almost full in each year group. The senior leadership team has been restructured and two additional associate principals have joined the team. Two additional teachers have been recruited, particularly to support interventions in English and mathematics. There have been no other significant changes.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The leadership team, including the governors, are committed and ambitious for the academy to do well. They have focused on the areas for improvement identified in the academy development plan and there is robust evidence to show that rapid progress is being made. Although student outcomes at the end of Year 11 in 2014 did not show a significant improvement on those from 2013, the proportions of students making expected or better than expected progress increased. This was particularly so in English, where the proportion of students who made better than expected progress is well above the 2013 national average. The gap between the achievements of disadvantaged students entitled to support through pupil premium funding and those of other students in the academy narrowed significantly and data from other year groups in the academy indicate that this trend will continue. Senior leaders regularly check the progress of all students and current data indicate that the rate of progress is accelerating, so that a greater proportion of students is reaching expected attainment levels for their age. The quality of teaching is steadily improving and is normally good and sometimes outstanding. The leadership team has taken appropriate actions to improve teaching which required improvement or which was judged to be inadequate; for example, through support plans for individual teachers, regular monitoring to ensure that targets were being met, and applying capability proceedings when necessary. In addition, data show that improved procedures for managing attendance have been highly successful in improving students' attendance and reducing the number of persistent absentees.

Similarly, the proportion of students who are excluded has reduced dramatically so that the rate of exclusion in the academy is now in line with national averages.

Governors are very supportive of the academy and know what they need to do to provide the level of challenge and support that is needed to secure further improvements. They receive high quality information which they use effectively to monitor the impact of performance management targets and of pupil premium funding. In addition, they have a very good understanding of the data on student achievements and this enables them to hold the academy to account. The standards committee, chaired by a member of the governing body, checks progress. Reports to the full governing body ensure that all members are aware of the successes, as well as next steps for further development. The governing body has a wide range of skills and experience. These are used well to provide support in other areas, such as finance and personnel management.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The range of evidence used to evaluate the quality of teaching is resulting in an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- The outcomes of monitoring and evaluation activities are used very effectively to plan for professional development and to target support.
- There are clear links between information from monitoring activities, performance management and pay.
- The new line-management structures and strategies are working well so that senior leaders are increasingly effective in holding teachers and middle leaders to account.
- New guidelines for teachers, including policies for marking and the management of behaviour, have successfully raised expectations and are helping to develop consistent approaches across the academy.
- The accuracy of assessments has improved through internal and external moderation. As a result, data on students' progress are more reliable and teachers have a better understanding of the next steps for students.
- Data are comprehensive, with a strong focus on the performance of different groups of students. As a consequence, academy staff are able to analyse these data to identify trends and next steps for improvement.
- There are very effective strategies in place for improving the literacy and communication skills of students. The impact of the strategies is carefully checked so that support programmes are well targeted and there is substantial evidence of accelerated progress as a result.
- The consistent implementation of strategies to manage behaviour has resulted not only in a reduction in the number of external exclusions, but also in the number of internal withdrawals and 'call-outs' from lessons. This has resulted in less disruption to learning and a calm and orderly working environment.

- The quality of marking is improving rapidly. In most subjects, marking is formative and students respond regularly to teachers' comments. In this way, students are helped to consolidate their learning and improve their work.
- Students have a good understanding of the level at which they are working and what they need to do to reach the next level. There is evidence in lessons and books that they are using the support well to review and improve their work.
- Partnership work with local schools is helping to drive forward improvements. For example, joint working with four local high schools is providing additional support to individual faculties and helping to ensure the accuracy of assessments. Additionally, links with primary feeder schools are ensuring a smooth transition for students so that support programmes, particularly for literacy, can be implemented as soon as students enter the academy.
- Student and parent questionnaires show increasing confidence and support for the work of the academy. Almost all parents, in their response to a recent questionnaire sent out by the academy, reported that they are given good information about how well their children are achieving and they strongly agreed that teaching and behaviour were good and that the academy was led and managed well. Students are also increasingly positive about the quality of teaching and support they receive.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- In a small number of subjects, expectations of students are not consistently high. For example, presentation and quality of work in books are poor and students are not expected to give extended responses. As a result, students do not try as hard and the quality of their work does not match the level at which they should be currently working.

External support

The sponsor and local authority are providing an appropriate level of support. The regular quality assurance reviews carried out by the local authority provide an additional level of challenge and are helpful in ensuring that the pace of improvement is maintained. The local authority helped to broker support from a local teaching school alliance, which the leadership team has found to be very helpful. In addition, the sponsor provides additional expertise, for example in the academy's specialisms of health and sports sciences, as well as opportunities for students for work experience and placements.