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Mrs Jenni Tyler-Maher
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Tyler-Maher

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cleeve Park School

Following my visit to your academy on 21 October 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2013. 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 academy should take further action to:

- check that sixth form students receive appropriate support and challenge to help them all make good progress
- ensure all leaders eradicate quickly the remaining inconsistencies in planning and teaching so that all students make good progress, especially in science.

Evidence

During the visit meetings were held with you and your senior leaders, a group of heads of department, your leaders for inclusion and members of the governing body. I also met with your advisor from The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT). The

academy strategic improvement plan was evaluated and I reviewed documents showing your monitoring of teaching, curriculum plans and minutes of governing body meetings. We visited classrooms together to watch teaching and look at students' books.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit there have been further staffing changes, notably in the science department. You have appointed a new director of learning to lead the science department and three new assistant headteachers. In September 2014 six newly qualified teachers joined the academy.

Main findings

Since the first monitoring visit, you and your leaders have continued to take firm action to deal with very weak planning and teaching. The dominance of weak teaching in the past is now disappearing and in most departments the planning and teaching is better. For example, in the English department planning and teaching is providing more challenge and students are making much better progress. Unvalidated results for 2014 show a rise in the percentage of students attaining A* to C grades and the academy exceeded targets set for attainment and progress. Students' English work is increasingly well presented. Most teachers are providing constructive and critical guidance for students in their books. This is deepening their subject knowledge. This area for improvement is progressing well. Rightly, leaders are using the English department to model best practice for other departments. Students who received additional support through the pupil premium funding made better progress in English than in previous years.

Your middle leaders are becoming more confident and competent in holding teachers to account for the quality and impact of their planning, teaching and marking. Through visits to classes, both announced and unannounced, leaders are checking the level of challenge in lessons and over time through scrutiny of student work. Work in some books is thorough and shows students are responding well to more demanding tasks and questions from teachers to deepen their understanding. This is not consistent throughout the academy. As a result, some students are not making rapid progress in all subjects.

Senior leaders are more demanding of middle leaders and are making sure that department reviews include robust analysis of data about the progress of different student groups. Heads of department are more able to describe where the 'holes' are in their departments. They have a better understanding of rates of progress expected nationally and can pinpoint where gaps in progress are too wide in some subjects. During my visit we agreed that monitoring needs to be even tighter so that

all leaders tease out how well students are developing their subject knowledge against their targets for GCSE and BTEC courses.

Despite clear improvements in achievement in English, art and design, French and physical education, other subjects fell below target in 2014, notably mathematics. This decline in results is in contrast to the previous positive trend in mathematics. Senior leaders have taken swift action to tackle this. The returning head of department has completed a full review of internal progress data for mathematics and is coaching the mathematics team to plan work that better suits students' ability. This decisive action to stem further decline is working. Weaknesses in science remain. Not all students are making the progress they are capable of making because expectations of some students are too low.

Leaders' work to improve the monitoring and support for disabled students and those with special educational needs has improved markedly since the first monitoring visit. Leaders know which students are doing well and which are underperforming. Some students are making more rapid progress, especially in English. The training for and deployment of teaching assistants is more strategic. They are providing increasing challenge in classes and helping students to think for themselves.

Heads of department are very positive about the greater level of challenge and support from senior leaders and governors. All leaders I met with during this visit accept that some results at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form were disappointing last year and the results of vocational courses and AS level courses were polarised. Working as a whole leadership team, with support from governors, you have stabilised staffing this year and are setting more demanding expectations to eradicate inconsistency in teaching. You tackled weak practice swiftly last year. However, there is an urgent need to ensure that all teaching secures good progress for all students this term. This is especially so for Year 12 students.

Governors have a more comprehensive understanding of their role in supporting and challenging leaders to drive improvement quickly at the academy. Governors have benefitted from effective training to help them analyse information about teaching and achievement data. This has helped governors sharpen their thinking and ask more insightful questions. The Chair of the Governing Body meets regularly with senior leaders and scrutinises targets and progress data. Governors have been invigorated by their training. They have not shied away from holding themselves to account for the impact of their work in helping the academy improve.

External support

The academy is continuing to work with the advisor from TKAT to check how well the academy is improving. The advisor has an accurate understanding of the

strengths and remaining issues at the academy, as result of regular meetings with leaders and governors. The reviews of the technology and science departments in the spring term helped focus leaders on strengths and key priorities for improvement in these departments. During my visit we agreed that leaders and teachers would benefit from visiting an outstanding science department to see teaching, curriculum plans and students' work in a school that may be external to the trust.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Bexley and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector