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7 November 2014

Mrs Michelle Long
Headteacher
Dixons Music Primary
Trinity Road
Bradford
BD5 0BE

Dear Mrs Long

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dixons Music Primary, Bradford

Following my visit to your school on 6 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- complete a review of the newly established governing body within an appropriate time scale
- complete an external review of the use of pupil premium funding
- amend the Ofsted improvement plan; sharpening the criteria against which success is measured and articulating more precisely the milestones in the journey of improvement with reference to pupils' achievement, teaching and the curriculum.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the assistant principle, the leader of music, the chair of the Governing Council and the executive principle to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy improvement plan was evaluated, as were some of the academy's documents related to achievement data, self-evaluation, monitoring activities and lesson observations. I scrutinised a sample of pupils' books, listened to pupils' singing during an assembly and you accompanied me on a learning walk around the academy.

Context

Since the inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased to 150 with the intake of two new reception classes. Two teachers and an assistant principle have joined the school and the music leader has left the school. The sponsor's Governing Council took over control of the governance of the school and has appointed a new Governing Body.

Main findings

Leaders and the Governing Council have acted upon the findings in the recent inspection report. Although they have not completed the recommended review of governance, they have recognised the imbalance between the focus on the primary and secondary academies in the previous arrangements. Consequently, The Governing Council have taken back control of the governance of the school and are forming a new governing body to be shared jointly with Dixons Allerton Academy, another primary academy in the Dixons' family. There is a plan to review the effectiveness of this governing body at an appropriate time after the new body has been established.

An internal review concurred with the inspection finding regarding the universal use of pupil premium funding. The academy has ceased the use of funding in this way and has employed a Higher Level Teaching Assistant to target the needs of eligible pupils. The academy plans to carry out an external review to ascertain the impact of this funding. This needs to happen in a timely manner.

The academy has replaced the leadership of music with the services of an external provider 'Learn to Rock'. This partnership, which had previously provided the instrumental tuition in the academy, now provides tuition in singing and curriculum leadership in music. Leaders accept that there is more they need to do to build their capacity to judge accurately the quality and effectiveness of this provision. Currently, pupils' ability in singing varies widely. Some pupils are beginning to show an appropriate grasp of pitch, particularly in the low registers of their voices. However, more pupils struggle with pitch and tone when singing in higher registers. The music provider has begun to work with teachers to provide training and guidance in the choice of songs and the development of singing.

The academy has appointed an assistant principle to share the leadership responsibly. A growth plan is in place and leaders acknowledge the need to continue to develop leadership responsibilities as the academy continues to grow. Leaders have refined the assessment cycles used in the school but, have maintained a strong focus on the data to track pupils' achievement. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are established. However, these could be strengthened through the triangulation of different elements which will provide a more evaluative view of the impact of leaders' actions that can be shared with governors. The academy's Ofsted improvement plan addresses the issues raised in the last inspection. Success statements show what leaders want to improve, but they are not sharp enough to enable progress to be measured. Similarly, the plan does not articulate clearly enough the milestones that will be achieved on the journey to good. It does not set out clearly which aspects of teaching need to be improved and how leaders will check teaching is having the desired impact on the progress pupils are making.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The academy has drawn on support from the Dixons Family to take decisive action to improve governance arrangements for the school. The governing body's remit will now focus on the primary academy's work and progress.

Arrangements with other Dixons Academies have also enabled the moderation of end of year assessments across the group.

Support from the external music provider, Learn to Rock, has enabled teachers to receive helpful guidance about the choice of songs and training in the teaching of singing. They are building a curriculum to support the progression of singing as pupils move through the academy.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector

- Local authority - including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] - for academies