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Mrs Carol Walker
Principal
Wybers Wood Academy
Timberley Drive
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Lincolnshire
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Dear Mrs Walker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wybers Wood Academy, North East Lincolnshire

Following my visit to your academy on 6 November 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 academy 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 the Education Advisory Board (EAB) are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- sharpen improvement plans so that the academy's progress towards good can be monitored more effectively
- ensure the numerical targets to be used for monitoring the academy's progress towards good fully reflect the ambition of leaders, the EAB and the sponsor
- ensure existing or predicted gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils are closed rapidly.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior and middle leaders, representatives of the EAB and a representative of the sponsor to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy's development plans were evaluated. I also toured the academy with two Year 6 pupils.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in June 2014, four class teachers, including one with a middle leadership responsibility, have left the academy. The assistant principal will leave at the end of the autumn term. In September, two newly qualified teachers joined the academy and an experienced temporary teacher took up post for one term. In January 2015, two experienced teachers will join the academy, one full time and one part time. Two higher level teaching assistants have also left the academy and have not been replaced.

Main findings

You, your leadership team, the EAB and the sponsor feel the inspection judgement fairly reflected the academy's position at the time. Action to address the areas for improvement identified is wide-ranging and good use is being made use of internal expertise and external support to ensure achievement, teaching and middle leadership improve quickly. Staffing is more stable and forthcoming planned teacher absences are being managed well to minimise discontinuity in teaching. While improvements in a number of areas are evident since the section 5 inspection you recognise that more work is needed to ensure good quality and consistency across all aspects the academy's work.

Outcomes in the national curriculum tests and assessments in 2014 show a broadly improving picture compared with the academy's performance in 2013. However, writing across the school and the progress of the most able pupils at Key Stage 2 rightly remain priorities. While gaps between the performance of boys and girls have narrowed in Key Stage 2, this is not the case in Key Stage 1. Outcomes for children at the end of the Early Years were less positive than in 2013. However, you are confident that this reflects the increased accuracy of assessment as a result of extensive moderation rather than a decline in the quality of provision.

Transition between key stages and classes has been improved. This is helping to ensure pupils' needs are met more effectively and their rate of progress is sustained. Teachers have higher expectations of the progress that pupils should be making and are making more effective use of assessment information to ensure work is pitched with the right degree of challenge for different groups of learners. Pupils are increasingly rising to the challenge of the bronze, silver and gold learning objectives and are keen to try harder work. Assessment information is also being used more effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. Targeted in-class support and greater use of specific small group interventions, particularly at Key Stage 2, are enabling these gaps to be addressed more effectively. 'Working walls' in classrooms are helping pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. The academy's monitoring confirms improvement in the marking of pupils' work and the provision of feedback on next steps. However, leaders acknowledge that they need to provide more training, particularly with new staff, to ensure that the academy's marking policy is applied consistently.

Developing consistently positive pupil attitudes to learning has a much higher profile across the academy. Pupils know the features of good learning behaviour, for example, the importance of remaining focused when talking about their learning and sharing ideas in a group. Teachers are increasingly planning and teaching in a way that promotes good behaviour for learning. Learning support staff are increasingly developing their skills to meet the new expectations for their role.

Work is well underway to develop the curriculum so it better meets the needs and interests of all pupils. Pupil views have also been used effectively to influence curriculum decisions and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' engagement and attitudes to learning. You and other leaders are looking carefully at planning for progression in the new curriculum and are embedding new approaches to assessing without levels. Effective action is being taken to involve parents more closely in their child's learning. For example, there is emerging evidence that a pilot approach to the setting of homework in Year 3 and 4 has been positively received by parents.

Improvement plans incorporate the inspection findings and success criteria exemplify the improvements intended. However, timescales and milestones could be helpfully incorporated to better evaluate progress and impact at different points on the improvement journey and ensure that any 'slippage' is quickly picked up. Numerical targets have been set for improvements in pupils' achievement but these need refining to ensure they fully reflect the ambition of leaders, the EAB and the sponsor for the academy to be good at its next inspection.

Staff are working together more cohesively, as a whole school and in their phase teams, to share good practice and identify where further development is most urgently needed. Middle leaders are developing in their roles but some are still very new to post and it is too soon to see the impact of their work. Nevertheless, middle leaders do have a better understanding of priorities in their respective areas and the actions they need to take to address issues have been identified. Use of external professional development, such as the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership programme, is helping two colleagues to improve their leadership skills. However, overall, middle leaders' involvement in monitoring the impact of their work on teaching and pupils' learning is still at an early stage.

Members of the EAB have a good knowledge of the academy's performance and are well placed with their knowledge and skills to closely monitor its progress towards good. However, improvement plans and success criteria need to be more precise if this is to be achieved.

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

At the time of this inspection, the sponsor is supporting the academy's improvement effectively. Work with other academies within the trust, both primary and secondary, are helping your academy to improve. Involvement with a local school improvement organisation and work with other local authority schools are being used well to address the different areas for improvement. For example, middle leaders are involved in subject specific networks and the external moderation of pupils' work.

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

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk] - for academies, free schools, UTCs and studio schools