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Alison Mobbs
Headteacher
Lynn Grove High School
Lynn Grove
Gorleston
Great Yarmouth
NR31 8AP

Dear Mrs Mobbs

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Lynn Grove High School

Following my visit to your academy on 12–13 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions taken since the academy's previous monitoring visit.

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 December 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 Director of Children's Services for Norfolk, and the Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Cc. Chair of the Governing Body
Cc. Local authority

Annex

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

- Raise the quality of teaching to at least good by ensuring that all teachers:
 - make thorough and consistent use of information about students' attainment and progress to plan and provide lesson activities that are suitably challenging for all ability groups
 - making the best use of available learning time in lessons for productive work
 - give students more opportunity to think harder and discuss their work in lessons.
- Raise students' achievement by ensuring that:
 - all teachers mark students' work regularly, with clear advice on how to improve it, and make sure students act on this advice
 - all staff share learning targets with the students.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that:
 - information about students' progress is used consistently, quickly and effectively by all leaders and teachers to support any students who are starting to fall behind in their work
 - the impact of activities funded by the pupil premium is monitored and reviewed with greater rigour by all leaders in order to close the gap in the achievement of eligible students
 - subject leaders have the skills they need to be confident in holding their teams to account.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 12–13 November 2014

Evidence

Meetings were held with the headteacher, two deputy headteachers, two assistant headteachers, seven middle leaders, three representatives of the governing body, two groups of students, and two representatives of Creative Education Academies Trust. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) observed 10 part-lessons jointly with senior leaders. Lessons in the following subjects were observed: English; mathematics; science; history; modern foreign languages; media; design and technology; art and design. The academy's most recent information on students' attainment and progress was analysed. A sample of students' current work, plans for improvement and monitoring records of teaching were scrutinised. Safeguarding documents were checked.

Context

Twelve new staff joined the academy at the start of term. Since the previous monitoring visit, a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and new subject leaders in history and religious education have started. The academy is scheduled to become a sponsored academy on 1 December 2014 as part of the Creative Education Academies Trust.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders are taking effective steps to improve the quality of teaching. Accurate judgements about the quality of teaching are leading to training being better matched to staff needs. This includes opportunities for teachers to share their good practice within the school and to benefit from external initiatives such as the 'improving teacher programme'. Joint observations with senior leaders indicate that these approaches are having a positive impact on: the quality of the learning environment; the clarity of success criteria shared with students; the use of computer resources to structure learning and manage time; the design of engaging activities; the use of questioning and discussion. Students who discussed their learning with HMI in lessons and through discussion groups valued the improvements made while acknowledging that some inconsistencies remain.

The quality of marking and feedback students receive is an area of inconsistency. Although all staff now follow the marking policy, the impact on students' progress is more variable. Similarly, although staff set targets and assess students' progress regularly, students do not always achieve well. Although most students have very positive attitudes, teaching designed to develop their learning habits is a further area of inconsistency. However, the feedback teachers now receive is more sharply focused on addressing inconsistencies in students' learning in lessons and over time. Better scrutiny of students' work, at best where middle leaders such as subject coordinators involve collaboration between staff and with governors, is contributing.

Where middle leaders are adapting the academy's policies to their subject, for example by focusing on students' responses to marking in modern foreign languages or by providing prompts to aid peer assessment in design and technology, the impact on students' progress is more discernible. The success with which different subjects use targets is a mixed picture. A Year 9 student helpfully distinguished between targets that are 'challenging' and 'out of reach', reflecting other students' concerns.

Information about students' progress is more plentiful than at the time of the last inspection. However, not all teachers and middle leaders are skilled in interpreting or using data. This is slowing the academy's progress because lesson planning does not always take enough account of students' varied starting points and extra support for individuals take too long to get started. Although the academy has appointed progress leaders to address students' uneven performance between subjects, these roles are at an early stage of development. Senior leaders have also recognised the need to promote students' progression by adjusting the curriculum. For example, cross-curricular work, enrichment and extra-curricular activities are not always used strategically enough to have an impact on students' achievement.

Currently, the usefulness of the academy's tracking system depends on the accuracy of teachers' assessments. The wide gaps between students' predicted and actual GCSE grades in 2014 indicate that further training and moderation are required in order to address this weakness. Nevertheless, the narrower gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students in 2014 indicates some improvement in the use of progress data to identify students in need of extra help and guidance, in this case supported by pupil premium funding. Improvements in English, in particular students' reading, also show that leadership and management changes are starting to take effect.

Parents and carers are responding well to leadership initiatives designed to support students' learning. They value sessions such as those provided for parents and carers of Year 10 students that focused on revision techniques. Useful information and guidance have contributed to improved attendance at parent consultation evenings for all year groups. Well-established student leadership, new approaches to behaviour management and more structured use of form time are also contributing to students' perception that their contribution to learning increasingly matters.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Senior leaders are using external support effectively to increase the rigour of monitoring and evaluation and to prioritise improvements.
- Through more direct involvement in monitoring and evaluation governors are better placed to hold leaders, including subject coordinators, to account.
- All staff are directed to 'teaching and learning groups' led by teachers able to model good practice. Better teaching is developing as a result.

- In subjects such as English, well-presented displays of students' work contribute to improving standards because students can clearly see what is expected.
- More students are given opportunities to get actively involved in their lessons. This capitalises on their very positive attitudes to learning.
- Students are in a better position to use self-evaluation more productively because teachers make the purpose of students' work clearer.
- Students' leadership roles contribute to the achievement and well-being of other students. Subjects providing these roles include mathematics, music and sports.
- Effective use of pupil premium funding enabled disadvantaged students to attain better results in 2014, closer to the attainment of other students.
- Parents are able to support their child's learning more effectively because they are given more comprehensive information and more frequent progress reports.
- More structured use of form time and punctual starts to lessons contribute to students' perceptions that the ethos of the academy is improving.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Inaccurate assessments by teachers contribute to examination results that are lower than academy predictions and significantly below students' targets.
- Good learning habits developed by younger students, for example noting other students' responses to questions or arriving at lessons having researched topics, are not always reflected in teachers' expectations of older students.
- Although inadequate teaching is now rare, teaching that is not good still limits students' achievement, particularly where the subject is not led well by example.
- Inconsistencies remain in the quality of teachers' feedback and marking, in particular ensuring that students understand and act upon guidance given.
- The range of teaching strategies used is not always wide enough to meet students' diverse needs, including those of the most able students. The proportion of A* and A grades attained at GCSE remains below average in a range of subjects.
- Monitoring of pupils' progress across subjects is not effective enough. In 2014 not enough students attained a higher grade in both English and mathematics.
- Analysis of progress data takes too long to lead to support for students, groups of students or particular classes that are not making the progress expected.
- Cross-curricular links are not clear enough to help students deepen their knowledge or apply their skills in the context of different subjects.
- Curriculum enrichment is not used strategically enough to improve students' achievement or maximise their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Increased extra-curricular opportunities for students to reinforce learning in lessons are not always attended by those who are falling behind.

External support

The academy draws on a wide range of support from the local authority, education consultants and the Creative Education Academies Trust. Support is proving effective in helping to improve the quality of teaching through more rigorous monitoring,

evaluation and performance management. In addition, self-evaluation is becoming better informed through more widespread consultation with students and parents. Improvement in subjects is benefiting from training for teachers and middle leaders. However, subject-specific support where students' achievement remains low in relation to schools nationally is at an early stage.