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22 October 2014

Miss F Miller
Headteacher
The Robert Napier School
Third Avenue
Gillingham
Medway
ME7 2LX

Dear Miss Miller

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Robert Napier School

Following my visit to your academy on 22 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- set challenging but realistic targets for improvements in the achievement of different groups of students by key points in the year
- ensure the academy's action plan addresses the areas for improvement reported at the previous inspection
- make sure the plan includes the starting point for each piece of work, actions to be taken, the intended impact and the progress expected by each review point, so you can check its effectiveness and make adjustments if needed

- give the advisory board regular reports showing the proportions of each student group on track to make expected or more than expected progress, so governors can see whether achievement is improving and hold you to account for this
- carry out an external review of governance and act on the findings.

Context

You are leaving at the end of the spring term. Recruitment is underway for a new headteacher. Since the previous inspection two new assistant headteachers have joined the senior leadership team, one is new to the academy. Three assistant headteachers have left.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, senior leaders, the executive principal of the academy trust and members of the advisory board, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I scrutinised documents including the academy's action plans and information about students' progress. We briefly visited lessons to see teaching and learning.

Main findings

Your action plan is incoherent and not well focused on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. It does not identify the starting point for each piece of work. The plan does not define the specific steps leaders will take to bring about improvements. Intended outcomes are imprecise and unrealistic for the given timescale. No targets have been set for improvements in achievement of different groups of students. The progress you expect to make by your termly review points is not clear.

You know that previous evaluations of the quality of teaching have been over generous. You are working to put this right and help teachers improve. Leaders now visit lessons daily, typically seeing each teacher twice a week. Teachers receive feedback on areas for improvement. Relevant support and training is available for them. Leaders are planning more personalised support for teachers who need to improve the most. However, your approach to checking teaching quality is not sharp enough. Leaders have not established a co-ordinated plan of action for this work, or made it clear how evidence gathered should be recorded and shared.

Members of the advisory board are determined the academy should do well. However, they have not held you to account effectively since the previous inspection. The reports they receive do not help them gain a deep enough understanding of students' achievement. They are rightly questioning the way in which they work and recognise the need for an improved approach.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. My next visit will consider how well leaders, governors and the academy trust are bringing about lasting improvements in teaching and raising achievement.

External support

The trust has not held you to account effectively enough. The executive principal has not made sure the academy action plan is fit for purpose. She visits the school weekly to discuss progress and see teaching but the information gathered is not used effectively to support improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Her Majesty's Inspector