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John Martin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Martin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oldbury Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 25 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 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 school should take further action to:

- ensure that performance management systems identify all non-completion of performance management meetings so that they can be completed in a timely fashion.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your deputy headteacher and senior leaders, the health and safety officer, the chair and vice chair and a member of the governing body, staff and students to discuss the actions taken since the last monitoring visit. I scrutinised a range of documents including performance management systems, achievement information, the academy's monitoring records

and visited nine lessons and observed students' behaviour around the site at break and lunchtime.

Context

There have been a number of changes to staff since my last visit. Twenty three teachers, including two senior leaders have left. Two new senior leaders and 21 teachers have joined.

Main findings

You have continued your drive to improve the academy. The leadership of teaching is improving. Middle managers are more accountable for improving teaching through the re-organisation of the faculties. The new faculty structure links more closely to the academy's improvement targets. Each faculty is linked to a member of the senior leadership team and a governor. They have regular meetings to check teaching and learning. This has given staff a better understanding of students' progress.

You have a more accurate view of teaching. Your new monitoring cycle takes better account of a greater range of information to identify good teaching. This includes students' progress over time and teachers' planning. You no longer rely solely on a judgment of what is seen in a lesson. Teachers are now expected to identify strategies to support the progress of different groups of students, especially those who have literacy needs, those eligible for the pupil premium and the most able. As a result the proportion of students who gained at least a C grade in the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2014 has improved in a range of subjects.

You are holding staff to account better for their teaching. The performance management system has been re-structured to match more closely the academy's improvement targets. All staff have a target for narrowing the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and others together with a literacy target. Human resources oversee this and governors monitor it. Governors have better information about the proportions of staff who achieve their teaching targets. Your identification of weaknesses and provision of support are swifter. However, you do not identify any performance management meetings that have not taken place in a timely fashion. The majority of staff spoken to were positive about the re-structures of staff and their new targets. They view you and your senior team as supportive, and believe change has been well managed.

You have tightened systems for checking that the website is up-dated regularly and has the most current information about students' progress on it. The information technology manager is developing a site map to make navigation around the website clearer. Health and safety remains a priority for you, to ensure the wellbeing of students and staff around the site and on academy visits. Students spoken to were very positive about the academy and their good relationships with staff. They know

about risky behaviours associated with social networking, extremism and exploitation.

Governors continue to challenge you and keep up-to-date with new priorities. For example, they take part in staff training activities such as the recent training about the dangers associated with extremism. Governors have reorganised their committee structure to better link to the academy's priorities. Governors have identified the need to seek the views of parents. They have encouraged parents and carers to use the on line questionnaire (Parent View) and also send out additional questionnaires. They respond to issues raised by parents. The re-organisation of the parents' forum has also encouraged greater parental participation.

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

External support

The academy is working strategically with several schools including Kingswinford School, Wodensborough, Westminster, St Michael's and Aston Manor and consultants from the local authority. For example, collaborative work has been undertaken to improve teachers' accuracy in marking. Additionally support has been provided to identify students at risk of underperforming and refinements have been made to the baseline testing of Year 7 students' for reading.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Sandwell.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector