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Friday 28 November

Mr D Anderson
The Principal
Broadlands Academy
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Dear Mr Anderson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Broadlands Academy

Following my visit to your school on Friday 28 November, 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- establish the proposed interim management board by January 2015 so that governance is strengthened and better able to support school leaders in driving up standards
- ensure the quality of marking in all subjects matches the best in the academy.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal, other senior leaders, Year 8 students and a member of the governing body. A telephone call was held with a representative of the sponsor to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A range of documents were reviewed including the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, records of monitoring undertaken by

middle leaders. A range of students' books were scrutinised jointly with middle leaders. Several mathematics lessons were visited jointly with the principal.

Context

Since the last full inspection in June 2014 nine teachers have left the school. Roles and responsibilities of middle leaders have been re-defined. A new mathematics leader and teaching team for mathematics have been appointed. An interim management board is due to replace the governing body in December 2014.

Main findings

The Principal's drive sense of purpose to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement, identified in the last full inspection report, has continued unabated. All staff across share the Principal's drive to make things better and clearly understand the part they play in securing improvements. This is illustrated in the way staff have been involved in revising the academy development plan so it accurately aligns with the inspection findings. The new monitoring cycle, to check on the success of planned improvements such as to those in marking and teaching, is being directed in a determined fashion by senior leaders. As a result of this collective effort, in 2014 the proportion of students achieving 5 good GCSE outcomes at A*-C rose further and is now above the national average.

The careful consideration given by senior leaders to the individual professional development needs of staff is resulting in a 'cultural shift' at the academy. Their joint approach is underpinned by the development of enjoying learning for those who work and study here. Training for middle leaders is helping them swiftly improve their subjects. One reported 'I am now shown what to do, helped to do it and now able to do so'. A joint book scrutiny activity with middle leaders demonstrated an increasingly accurate awareness of specific issues, such as how well students' literacy skills are being developed across the curriculum. Paired observations of lessons are resulting in a greater depth of professional dialogue between staff about students' learning and how best to develop it. Teachers are supported and challenged to reflect on their classroom practice and then re-shape lesson activities in light of the feedback they are given. This is then followed up rigorously by middle leaders and is leading to rapid improvements to the quality of teaching.

The new policy for 'triple impact' marking work is helping teacher's identify students' next steps in mathematics learning more precisely. The best marking is detailed and students report that it is '...most helpful when comments are explained to us at the same time'. Older students evaluate their test responses to solving linear equations carefully providing each other with detailed questions to check their mathematical understanding. Where the best learning occurs teachers are using the information gleaned through marking and feedback to inform their planning in order to set work

at a challenging level for students. In these instances students are more engaged in activities, responding to feedback in a more meaningful way, more punctual to

lessons and taking greater pride in their work. Not all work and marking, such as in English and science books, is of the regularity and standard expected and remains a focus for leaders, particularly in individual subjects.

The sponsor has taken strong and decisive action following their review of governance to secure the future success of the academy. The review of governance revealed a lack of appropriate skills in key positions on the governing body and resulted in the departure of several governors. In order to strengthen this aspect of academy leadership an interim management board will be put in place by December 2014. Currently a small core of governors remain and are playing their part in driving improvement. They are active in monitoring the progress of actions taken by school leaders and have a good understanding of students' achievement data including the performance of disadvantaged students. Regular checks on the success of the academy development plan help them to keep abreast of improvements to teaching, marking and developments within individual subjects.

Ofsted will carry out a further visit in 2015 in order to provide further support and challenge to academy leaders and to examine the impact of the interim management board.

External support

Training provided by the sponsor for middle leaders is successfully helping them develop their skills in monitoring teaching and evaluating students' achievement over time. A full external audit of how the academy meets the needs of students with special educational needs has provided the co-ordinator with detailed guidance on how to improve this part of the academy's work. External evaluations from consultants and the sponsor provide a useful confirmation of the accuracy of improvements to teacher's planning and students' achievement in mathematics and science.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Bath and North East Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Richard Light

Her Majesty's Inspector