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Martin Furniss
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Furniss

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Martin High School Anstey

Following my visit to your academy on 11 March 2015, 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 academy 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 November 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. The academy should take immediate action to:

- ensure leaders and managers hold teachers to account, to ensure that actions to taken improve the academy are implemented quickly, consistently and rigorously
- ensure that all leaders regularly and accurately monitor the impact of their work to make certain that actions taken are making enough difference to students' achievement.

Evidence

During the inspection I met with senior leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body. I undertook short visits to lessons, accompanied by senior leaders, and looked at the work in students' books. A range of documentation was considered, including: the

academy's action plan and self-evaluation; information on students' achievement; the academy's marking policy; department action plans and marking policies; minutes of the governing body, and records relating to observations of teaching.

Main findings

Leaders have devised an action plan that aims to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. However, the plan does not set out clearly what the intended impact of each action is supposed to be, and there is little indication of how the impact of the actions taken will be measured. This weakens the plan's effectiveness.

Intended improvements have not been implemented consistently enough. For example, while leaders have devised a new marking policy and have devoted considerable time to training teachers in how to mark and assess students' work, differences in the way individual subject departments have implemented the marking policy have limited the effectiveness of these changes. This is because leaders have not set out their expectations to staff clearly enough.

Students say that they like the new system of 'what went well' and 'even better if', but scrutiny of their work shows that this system is not used consistently across the academy. While some teachers, for example in English, identify precisely the follow-up actions that students are required to take to improve their work, in other subjects, next steps are either not identified, or are not acted on by students. In some books, there was no evidence that the new marking policy had been implemented at all.

Following the inspection the school quickly implemented a new tracking system to give leaders and managers better information about the attainment and progress of different students. This system is not fully embedded, and, as a result, leaders are not able to analyse information about the achievement of different groups. This limits their capacity to then address any weaknesses in the teaching of these groups. Teachers now have better information about students' prior learning and progress than before. However, they do not use this information consistently well to plan learning that provides enough challenge for all groups of students, so that all make the progress they should.

The academy's action plan identifies the need to accelerate the progress made by the most-able students, but it does not state clearly how this will be addressed, or how the impact of actions taken will be measured. Teachers have not received clear guidance on how best to challenge the most-able students and do not consistently ensure that work is hard enough for these students.

During the inspection many strengths in teaching were noted. For example, in a drama lesson, students used the case of Derek Bentley to explore injustice, and devised their own thoughtful and moving responses to the case. They gave each

other helpful feedback to improve their pieces. However, such strong practice is not yet consistent enough. Leaders have plans in place to allow teachers to learn from each other's practice, but have not made clear how they will address weaker teaching.

Since the inspection, governors have undergone training and now have a better understanding of the features of effective governance. They recognise that they have not in the past held leaders stringently to account for the achievement of students and the quality of teaching, and have relied too heavily on information provided by academy leaders. They have now put in place an action plan to ensure that they are helping leaders to secure the necessary improvement.

External support

Leaders and teachers have received support from examination boards and from other schools in preparation for teaching Key Stage 4 courses. In addition, governors have arranged for an external consultant to undertake an audit of their skills, so that any remaining gaps can be identified and relevant training put in place.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Duignan
Her Majesty's Inspector