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16 March 2015

Mr Neil Harrison
Head of School
University Academy Warrington
Insall Road
Warrington
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Dear Mr Harrison

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to University Academy Warrington, Warrington

Following my visit to your academy on 13 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

On the day of the visit the academy was holding a Year 8 and 9 review day and consequently no teaching was taking place. During the visit, meetings were held with the head of school, senior leaders, the heads of English and mathematics, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Executive Principal and a representative of the University of Chester Academies Trust. Academy improvement plans were evaluated. Documents summarising other actions taken since the section 5 inspection were also scrutinised. A tour of the academy was undertaken to meet staff and speak with parents and students attending the review day.

Context

Since the last inspection a new head of English and five English teachers have been appointed.

Main findings

The academy's post inspection improvement plans tackles the key recommendations arising from the November inspection. Monitoring and tracking systems are well focused and actions to elicit improvement clearly stated, reviewed and actioned.

Current academy tracking and monitoring data indicate that students in Year 11 and 10 are making better progress and GCSE results in 2015 are projected to register a significant improvement. Intervention programmes to improve attainment and achievement in English and mathematics are well targeted and monitored. There is a stronger focus to ensure that work in lessons meets the learning needs of all students. Teachers now have appropriate data and information to enable them to better plan learning activities and meet the needs of all students. Staffing in English is now stable and strategies to enable better outcomes are beginning to impact.

Work through the teaching school alliance is having a positive impact on improving teaching, learning and assessment. There are now well focused continual professional development programmes that are building the capacity of staff to improve the quality of provision across all the academies work.

The recently introduced student behaviour policy is beginning to impact upon student attitudes. Exclusion rates have declined significantly. Academy data indicates that behaviour policy is more systematically and routinely implemented by staff. Attendance rates are improving.

Academy leaders acknowledge that more work is required to embed literacy, numeracy and oracy skills especially at Key Stage 3. A student culture of reading for pleasure has not yet been sufficiently embedded across the academy.

Systems and processes for holding senior and middle leaders more accountable for their areas of responsibility have been strengthened. Departmental heads are now fully involved in the observation of teaching and learning. Consequently they have a more accurate view of the strengths and areas of improvement within their departments. Target setting is now more ambitious so as to enable both teachers and students to have higher expectations for their performance.

Governors receive regular, detailed and informative reports on academy performance. They are very well led by a highly experienced Chair who keeps a sharp eye on academy improvement across provision. Governors have a strong understanding of student monitoring and tracking evidence and on how well students are doing in their studies. They have a good understanding of the use of

pupil premium funding (additional government money), the performance of different groups of students and the performance of different subject areas.

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

External support

Network meetings provided by the teaching school alliance are now playing a key role in developing high-quality and well focused continuous professional development. This work is building capacity of senior and middle leaders as well as teaching staff to improve both systems and the impact of improved teaching and learning on outcomes for students. The University of Chester Academies Trust has sharpened the quality of its support so as to better promote accelerated improvement and higher expectations for staff and students within the academy.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the IEB, the Director of Children's Services for Warrington and as below.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- For free schools, UTCs and studio schools [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school is a non-maintained special school [hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk]