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Mr Ian Barton
Principal
The Dukeries Academy
Whinney Lane
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Newark
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Dear Mr Barton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Dukeries Academy

Following my visit to your school on 24th 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 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 October 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

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the Vice Principal and a group of students from Years 11, 12 and 13. I also met with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and the Managing Director and the Senior Academy Improvement Director from the Academy Transformation Trust (ATT). I carried out a work scrutiny with the co-ordinator for disabled students and those with special educational needs (SENCO), and discussed the impact of her work. These meetings were held in order to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I visited a number of classrooms, spoke with students informally and looked at their work. I examined a range of documentation, including the academy's improvement plan, analysis of your recent data and minutes of governing body meetings.

Context

Since the previous inspection, two new governors have joined the governing body. A new Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body have been elected from existing governors. An Assistant Principal and a Vice Principal have left and not been replaced. A mathematics teacher, a finance assistant and an administrator have started work. The business manager has been promoted to the operations manager and is a member of the senior team.

Main findings

You have high ambitions for the academy. You are well-supported by your Vice Principal, who joined in September. She holds subject leaders to account robustly and has provided the SENCO with a greater understanding of her role. As a result these leaders are growing in confidence.

Your school improvement plan is detailed and incorporates all the areas for improvement identified by the recent section 5 inspection. There is evidence that monitoring and evaluation activities take place, but there is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for each of these activities, including how governors are involved. The progress board, comprising representatives from ATT, performs a useful function in working alongside the new Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, to ensure continued academy improvement.

Current information on students' achievement indicates that Year 11 students are making rapid progress in English. Students' achievement in mathematics, including that of the more able, is also improving. However their progress in mathematics is still not in line with national levels. School leaders acknowledge that more work needs to be done to address the gaps in students' prior mathematical understanding.

School leaders have introduced an effective 'make progress, not excuses' plan for sixth-form students who are underachieving. Students value this and say that it helps them to meet deadlines and understand what more they need to do to improve. As a result, their attendance and motivation are improving. Sixth-form students now have more opportunities to learn about potential safety risks.

The SENCO has made significant improvements to the support given to disabled students and those with special educational needs. She has ensured that they are accurately identified and has a clear understanding of their capabilities. As a result, their progress is improving. The SENCO has developed meaningful individual support profiles in conjunction with the students. These provide a clear explanation of how the student feels that they learn best. Teachers are using the profiles to plan their lessons to help meet their learning needs. However, there is insufficient time for teaching assistants to work with teachers to plan learning for these students.

The quality of teaching is improving. School leaders routinely monitor the quality of teaching, taking into consideration a range of evidence, including the quality of

marking and students' views, as well as lesson observations. A recent 'no pens' day has encouraged teachers to be more creative. The quality of teachers' feedback and marking is improving, but some inconsistencies remain, particularly in the sixth form.

Following the re-launch of the behaviour policy, staff and students say that teachers are more consistent in addressing low level disruption. During a fire alarm, I noted that all students moved swiftly to their assigned places, and waited respectfully for further instructions.

Governors are highly committed and are developing their effectiveness in supporting rapid school improvement. They present increasing levels of challenge at governing body meetings. A nominated governor attends pupil premium review meetings with progress leaders and reports back to governors on the difference that this funding is making for eligible students. Governors' knowledge of the use of catch-up spending and its impact is less secure.

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 support provided by ATT is highly valued by school leaders and governors. The senior academy improvement director ensures that her support is both personalised and collaborative. Support is accurately matched to the development needs of staff. ATT have a group of core subject specialists who carry out appropriate moderation activities to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire, the Education Funding Agency and the Chief Executive Officer for the Academy Transformation Trust.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of the Governing Body
cc. Local authority
cc. The Education Funding Agency (EFA)