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26 March 2015

Mr David Page
Principal
Trinity Academy
Church Balk
Thorne
Doncaster
DN8 5BY

Dear Mr Page

Special measures monitoring inspection of Trinity Academy

Following my visit with Steven Goldsmith and Judith Straw, additional inspectors, to your academy on 24 and 25 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy should only appoint newly qualified teachers where appropriate support for them can be guaranteed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children and Young People's Services for Doncaster.

Yours sincerely
Marianne Young

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is at least good by:
 - ensuring all teachers plan activities which meet the needs and interests of students
 - raising the aspirations and expectations of teachers so that they challenge students to make at least good progress and ensure students who are capable of achieving the highest grades do so
 - improving the quality and consistency of marking and feedback so it clearly identifies what students need to do and improve their work and make better progress
 - allowing the students opportunities to act on the feedback they are given
 - ensuring curriculum provision supports students' progress more effectively.

- Improve the behaviour and attendance of students by:
 - eradicating disruptive behaviour in lessons by providing students with work which challenges them, interests them and motivates them to make at least good progress
 - continuing to work with parents and carers to raise the level of attendance.

- Raise attainment overall, including in the sixth form, and especially in mathematics by:
 - accelerating the progress made by all students, focusing especially on the achievement made by boys, the most able students and students supported by the pupil premium.
 - ensuring that the most able students who are capable of achieving the highest grades do so.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management and develop the role of leaders and managers at all levels by:
 - ensuring the development plan is clear about who is doing what, why they are doing it and the impact it will have on students' progress
 - holding middle leaders to account for the progress students make in their subjects and ensuring middle leaders hold their teachers to account also
 - providing middle leaders with opportunities to engage in monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions taken
 - focusing all actions on improving the amount of progress students make and raising the levels of attainment, including those in the sixth form
 - inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly-qualified teachers.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations about governance to the authority responsible for the academy.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 March 2015.

Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons and looked at students' work in their books. During many of these observations they were accompanied by members of the senior leadership team. A range of documents was scrutinised plus the academy's self-evaluation document as leaders prepare for re-inspection. Inspectors spoke formally to selected groups of students as well as with others during social times. Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, the Executive Principal and senior and middle leaders. A meeting was also held with the Chair of the Local Governing Board.

Context

The acting Principal was appointed to the substantive post of Principal in February 2015. Four staff, including the director of mathematics and the assistant director of mathematics took up their posts on 1 January 2015. Three members of the teaching staff have left the academy this term.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Academy leaders collect information about the progress students make at regular intervals. One of these progress capture points took place prior to the monitoring inspection. It is evident that there is still a variable picture between different subjects, year groups and groups of students. Senior leaders recognise these differences and ensure that any interventions and additional help provided for students make a difference. Students' ability to read fluently and write at length is patchy. Additional help, particularly for the younger students, is having a noticeably positive impact. As a result, these students can understand text and read more fluently.

Lesson observations confirm leaders' data that students are doing better in English and mathematics than at this time last year, and also since the previous monitoring inspection. There is evidence, however, that not enough students are making more than expected progress in both English and mathematics. Additionally, the gap in expected progress made by Year 11 boys and girls and for those students supported by pupil premium (additional government funding) and those who are not, is wider than previously in mathematics. When inspectors looked at students' books, it is still apparent that in science, for example, prior underachievement is limiting the progress in this subject.

The quality of teaching

The enthusiasm for their subject shown by teachers and their awareness of students' potential, combined with regular checking and questioning, are evident in some lessons. Lessons are well planned, even when students are organised into ability groups, so that challenge is suitable. These strong elements were seen during the monitoring inspection and are evident in leaders' own records when they monitor the quality of teaching. Senior leaders provide coaching and support programmes for a number of teachers and these are beginning to result in improved teaching. However, there are still lessons where the pace of learning and the challenge provided to students is inappropriate. This results in limited, or very occasionally, no progress being made. Students told inspectors that the feedback they receive, either verbally or in their books helps them to know how to get better. Inspectors saw some very helpful marking, but in some books some teachers either do not mark regularly or restrict their marking to ticks and brief comments.

When inspectors looked at students' books and during a few lesson observations, in science and small group lessons in particular, there is a preponderance of inappropriate worksheets. For the most part, these are filled in sensibly, but do little to develop students' ability to think for themselves and develop their independence in some subjects. Occasionally, the task provided for students lacks challenge. Senior leaders are aware that the support provided by teaching assistants is underdeveloped. This is because, in a few lessons, their skills are not planned for appropriately.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students welcome visitors to the academy and the vast majority with whom inspectors spoke were happy to share their views. For the most part students move sensibly between lessons but when the staff presence is low some inappropriate behaviour was observed. Those students who have all or part of their lessons in Emmanuel House or through the DAPPE=R programme are making better progress than previously and their attendance has improved. Inspectors confirmed leaders' views and that of students that there is virtually no low-level disruption in lessons because, for the most part, behaviour is managed well. However, on some occasions, a few students do not engage in learning because teaching does not ensure that they are challenged and included.

Leaders analyse attendance in considerable detail and work with parents to ensure that all students go to the academy regularly. Current data confirms that attendance this year is improved for students in Year 11 and Year 13.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The Principal is under no illusion that, despite the academy making progress and moving forward towards the removal of special measures, much is still to be completed. His strong leadership, which is supported and endorsed by other senior leaders, is proving successful. More students are making the progress of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics, and the quality of teaching is better than was the case at the previous monitoring inspection.

Senior leaders gather a large amount of data from their regular monitoring and quality assurance activities. As a result, they have a thorough and secure knowledge about the progress being made by individual students. This includes information about students' attendance. Increasingly, middle leaders are taking charge of their own departments. They are more adept than previously at monitoring provision and holding staff to account. All actions, by both senior and middle leaders, are focussed clearly on improving students' progress and ensuring they do as well as they can.

Members of the governing body meet regularly and receive reports from a number of different leaders. Consequently, they can assure themselves that the information presented to them, much of which they request themselves, is accurate. Minutes of their meetings are comprehensive and their questions detailed, reflecting governors' better understanding and ability to interpret data, for example.

External support

Senior and middle leaders continue to receive support, coaching and challenge from other leaders from the Emmanuel Schools Foundation. Links continue to be developed with other secondary schools in the Doncaster area with several leaders attending network meetings. These links help Trinity Academy to become part of the local area of schools, to be less isolated and to contribute effectively to initiatives and developments in education.