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Mr Callum Orr
Principal
Rawlins Academy
Loughborough Road
Quorn
Loughborough
LE12 8DY

Dear Mr Orr

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rawlins Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 30 April 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 December 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the academy was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspections.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your Assistant Principal, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I visited some lessons and spoke with staff and students, particularly about teachers' marking and students' responses to it. The academy's improvement plan was evaluated and the implications of the review of the academy's use of the additional funding through the pupil premium were discussed. I scrutinised a range of documentation including information about students' current achievement.

Context

There is a new Chair and two Vice-Chairs of the Governing Body. They were elected on 27 April 2015. An Assistant Principal retired at the end of the spring term 2015.

Main findings

You, your leaders and governors are highly committed to improving students' achievement at the academy. Previous complacency is being challenged and eradicated. The actions that leaders are taking are well-considered and timely. You are rightly concentrating on improving both the quality of teaching and leadership. Your restructuring of the senior leadership team is resulting in members being fully involved in checking students' progress. As some of the senior leaders are relatively new to their roles, you are acting as a role model for them and using support from an outstanding academy to help develop the skills of these senior leaders. This is helping them to play a key role in improving students' achievement.

Since the last inspection, you have quickly increased the checks made on the quality of teaching. Having identified exactly where teaching that persistently still requires improvement is, you are tackling current weaknesses with suitable training and coaching, using the best practice within the academy. Your evaluations of the impact of coaching are leading to further decisive action.

Your fortnightly line-management meetings with heads of faculties focus sharply on students' progress, including the progress made by disadvantaged students who are being supported through the pupil premium funding. Your tracking of students' progress, including that of the disadvantaged students, indicates that many more are now making or exceeding the progress expected of them, than they were at the time of the last inspection. However, you recognise that there is still inconsistency in the frequency and quality of teachers' marking and students' responses to it.

Your academy improvement plan is suitable and addresses all of the issues from the last inspection. There are clear actions to improve the quality of leadership and management, teaching and students' achievement. The external reviews of governance and of the academy's use of the pupil premium are resulting in suitable planned actions to address the recommendations made. Governors have signed up to training to help improve their understanding about students' performance data. Governors have suitable plans to gather their own first-hand evidence about the quality of students' learning. The review of the pupil premium funding has raised governors' awareness about how well the funds are spent. Teaching staff are increasingly being held to account by leaders for the value provided by specific interventions to help disadvantaged students to achieve well.

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

External support

Although it is too early to judge the full impact of the external reviews of governance and the use of the pupil premium funding, there are early signs of stronger practices. Visits made by academy leaders to observe the quality of teaching in two other schools, including one judged by Ofsted to be outstanding, is giving them insights into how to improve teaching further in the academy.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire, the Diocesan Director of Education for Leicester City, the DfE Academies Advisers' Unit and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala
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
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]