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28 April 2015

Mr Jonathan Baddeley
Maple Court Academy
Beverley Drive
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST2 0DQ

Dear Mr Baddeley

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Maple Court Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 28 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in January 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the principal, other senior staff, the executive principal and the Chair of the Governing Body, who also represented the sponsor. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan were evaluated. The inspector made short visits to classrooms to talk to pupils and observe their learning. She scrutinised a sample of pupils' English and mathematics books and examined a number of documents, including: information about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement; communication with parents; the work of governors; and the management of pupils' behaviour.

Context

No new teachers have joined the academy since the section 5 inspection in January. Leadership has been restructured. Two directors of learning have been appointed, who will take up their posts in September. Temporary arrangements for some

classes remain as at the time of the inspection in January. Interviews for these posts are scheduled to be held soon.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

Strong senior leadership, as at the time of the previous inspection, continues to drive rapid improvement, well focused through the academy's detailed action plan. Actions are carefully planned against the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 Ofsted report. The plan includes appropriately challenging criteria by which leaders will judge if improvement is being made and pinpoints opportunities for leaders and governors to evaluate the difference individual actions have made. However, it is not clear when leaders will evaluate whether improvement overall is happening as quickly as expected.

The new staffing structure makes responsibilities clear and establishes strong lines of accountability beyond senior leaders. The two assistant Principals have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their designated aspects of the academy. Their actions are well focused and making a difference to pupils' behaviour and the achievement of younger pupils. The distribution of leadership to all teachers opens up management opportunities for relatively inexperienced teachers. This helps everyone contribute to the sense of shared responsibility for pupils' achievement that permeates the academy.

The vice-Principal has implemented a well-planned programme of training and support for teachers. Teachers are receptive to new ideas and readily try new ways of working. This is leading to notable improvement in the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils' achievement is improving fast. Almost all pupils are now making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The academy's detailed and accurate records of achievement show that pupils are making up the ground lost by their previous poor achievement. Most are catching up fast. In spite of such impressive progress, many pupils are still a long way behind where they should be for their ages. This is because their attainment has, until recently, been very low.

The College Academies Trust keeps a vigilant check on the academy's work and rigorously holds leaders to account for improvements to pupils' achievement. The trust has provided appropriate support to help improve the quality of teaching. The trust's statement of action is closely aligned with the academy's action plan so provides a secure steer. However, the lack of an overview of expected improvement at key points in the year means governors cannot measure whether improvement is happening quickly enough.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector