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Ms Sam Davidson
Principal
Carter Community School
Blandford Close
Poole
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Dear Ms Davidson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Carter Community School

Following my visit to your school 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 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 January 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection, although some further work is needed to strengthen the quality of improvement planning. As we discussed, the school should take further action to:

- Provide further training for staff to support their awareness of issues related to e-safety and the use of social media
- speed up improvements to teaching by ensuring that the feedback provided to staff is precise enough to support more effective follow-up
- improve the school development plan by identifying how the impact of actions taken will be measured, and at what points in time, and making clear the specific measurable goals towards which the academy is working.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and with other members of your leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the sponsor, to

discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy's action and development planning was also evaluated. I held meetings with a group of middle leaders and with six students from Years 7, 9 and 11. Together with a senior leader, I visited a small number of lessons across the school, where we also looked briefly at students' work. I also scrutinised a range of documentation, including records of the checks on teaching and information about safeguarding, including e-safety, and records of students' punctuality and attendance.

Context

Since the inspection in January 2015, your acting Principal role has been made permanent, as has that of the acting Vice-Principal.

Main findings

The improvements seen by the previous inspection team in January 2015 have been sustained and built upon. Higher expectations and standards are evident through much of the academy's work. Your focus on strengthening accountability has been an important ingredient, as has increasing the rigour and accuracy of the assessment of students' progress and attainment. The confidence and capacity of leaders throughout the academy continues to grow, and the support of staff from the sponsor has made a significant contribution to this. Governors, too, have benefited from the guidance of staff from the sponsor in strengthening the impact of their work with the academy. Leaders' checks on teaching are more frequent and are based on a good range of evidence. This is enabling leaders and governors to take robust action where there is underperformance in teaching and leadership. Stronger practice is also being used to support improvement and a suitable range of training is being accessed by staff. However, sometimes, the improvement points identified for teachers are not precise enough to enable more effective follow-up by leaders at the next round of checks.

Improvements in the use of assessment data have enabled a much sharper focus on those students, particularly in Year 11, who are at risk of underachieving. This, together with a more consistent approach to planning and teaching, is beginning to raise rates of progress across the school. Based on recent assessment data, you are confident that examination results will rise this year. The students who met with me said they had noticed behaviour had improved in their lessons. They feel that teachers are more consistent in their approach to managing any disruption to their learning in class. Your work to improve students' attendance is also beginning to bear fruit, together with evidence that persistent absence is declining. Students agreed that the academy's firm line on lateness is helping to ensure a prompt start to the school day. Following the issues raised in the inspection, a good range of support has been put in place to help students and parents to understand the risks associated with the internet and social media. However, more needs to be done to strengthen staff awareness of e-safety issues and to engage a greater proportion of parents with this programme.

All of this has been achieved through a focus on a series of short-term goals. Your planning reflects this, as the approach you have taken is to map out a work schedule of priorities and tasks to be completed. This has been effective in this period where the emphasis has been on tackling a range of weaknesses with great energy and drive. This focus has also helped to enthuse and galvanise staff in a shared commitment to improve the academy. However, as the foundations for further improvement have become established, the shortcomings of this approach are increasingly apparent. You recognise that your existing plans do not set out clearly enough how you will measure the impact of improvements, or enable you to know how quickly progress is being made. Because of this, it will become more difficult to identify those priorities that are on track or those where extra resource or new strategies need to be put in place. The sponsor agrees with this view and will support you in improving your plans. You have also agreed to share your revised plans with HMI as soon as they are ready.

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

Since September 2014, the range and effectiveness of the support provided by the sponsor, United Learning, has increased. Much of this support has focused on direct guidance for leaders at the academy, but is also beginning to work to build greater capacity for the academy to improve by itself. For example, staff across the academy have welcomed the help and advice they have received, particularly the opportunity to share and learn from colleagues in other United Learning academies.

Nevertheless, at the moment, the academy is reliant on considerable external support to sustain the pace of improvement. In addition, although the sponsor works closely with academy leaders to identify important improvement actions, these have not been linked to key impact measures, and appropriate checkpoints, in the academy development plan. This weakens the extent to which staff from the sponsor who work with the academy are fully accountable for the impact of their support.

The local authority has very little direct involvement with the academy. Nevertheless, the academy is participating in a borough-wide transition project being co-ordinated by the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector