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22 June 2015

Mrs Mary Sparrow
Principal
City Academy Norwich
299 Bluebell Road
Norwich
NR4 7LP

Dear Mrs Sparrow

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to City Academy Norwich

Following my visit to your school on 18 June 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 March 2015. 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. The school should take further action to:

- reduce the incidence of low level disruption to learning by ensuring all teachers follow the new student behaviour policy consistently
- ensure that all teachers give students precise feedback on their work, so that they know what to do in order to improve
- revise courses so that students complete activities and assessments that are appropriately challenging and that help prepare them for the next stage in their education.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the sponsor, the Transforming Education in Norfolk Group (TEN), to discuss the actions taken since the last

inspection. I made brief visits to a number of lessons and looked at the way teachers give pupils feedback about their work. I evaluated the academy's improvement plans and documents relating to the outcomes of monitoring activities.

Context

A number of teachers have left the academy since the previous inspection. You are completing a restructuring of staffing. A significant number of teachers will leave the academy at the end of the current academic year. Newly-appointed staff will join the academy in September 2015.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders and governors are taking determined action to address the academy's most urgent priorities for improvement. Changes to the way in which judgements are made about the impact of teaching on students' progress are giving you a clear sense of where standards are high, and where they need to improve further. You are ensuring that teachers receive the support they need to make the necessary changes; you have also taken difficult decisions when the quality of teaching has remained too low. A restructuring of staffing has helped you to strengthen leadership and ensure that individuals' roles and responsibilities are well-defined.

Attendance rates, though still below the national average, have increased since the previous inspection because many students have responded to the rewards they now receive for attending well.

You have changed the academy's behaviour policy so that all teachers are required to take responsibility for behaviour in their classrooms and follow a clear system of warnings, sanctions and rewards. However, not all teachers are following the new policy and reinforcing the academy's expectations. This means that the incidence of behaviour that disrupts learning is higher than it could be.

Subject leaders are starting to develop new course activities and assessment tasks to help students gain the knowledge and skills they will require to be successful at GCSE during the completion of their Key Stage 3 studies. Those who attend on-site alternative provision at 'The Hub' are benefiting from new courses that are helping to re-engage them in their learning. Students are working towards very ambitious targets; changes to the way leaders and teachers monitor their progress towards them are helping teachers to plan precise support for them when they fall behind. You are making sure that pupil premium funding is being spent directly in order to support disadvantaged students; you are tracking the progress of this group carefully.

In subject areas such as English and mathematics, teachers are setting students more challenging work to accelerate their progress. In some subjects, they are not doing this as well. Too often students complete work that is too easy or too difficult for them. You have developed a new feedback policy to ensure that teachers provide students with precise information about how they can improve. In some subjects, including English, art, music and drama students receive this guidance and respond to it; in others, students receive feedback which is not fit for purpose. This means they continue to make the same mistakes.

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

External support

The Transforming Education in Norfolk (TEN) Group, a federation of educational institutions in Norfolk, is providing administrative and other support for key leaders and managers which is enabling them to focus upon improving teaching and learning. Representatives of the group are helping senior leaders to make accurate judgements about standards at the academy. Teachers work with those in other member schools to establish that the marks or grades they apply to students' work are accurate.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board

cc. Local authority

cc. The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk

cc. For academies only [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]