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30 June 2015

Jeremy Chopping
Headteacher
Daubeney Academy
Orchard Street
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Bedford
MK42 7PS

Dear Mr Chopping

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Daubeney Academy

Following my visit to your school on 29 June, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school 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 inspection and at my first monitoring visit. The school should take further action to:

- provide more support for disadvantaged pupils, particularly the more able, to increase the proportion making better than expected progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and the two deputy headteachers. I met the local authority representative and four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I read a range of documentation and reviewed pupils' progress data. We carried out brief visits to all classes and spoke to pupils about their work. I checked the single central record for staff appointed since my previous visit in October 2014.

Context

A new deputy headteacher joined your leadership team in April 2015. The subject leaders for music and English are new to their role. From September 2015 the recently-appointed achievement leader will take responsibility for special educational needs and you are seeking to appoint a subject leader for design.

Main findings

The school is making good progress towards becoming a more effective school. Standards are rising, the quality of teaching is improving and subject leaders are now monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility more effectively. Attendance is closely monitored and behaviour has improved significantly this year.

Following my first visit, and a comprehensive local authority audit recently, you acted promptly to improve your monitoring of teaching and learning. Subject leaders now have enough time to gather direct evidence of strengths and to address weaknesses in their subject. Senior leaders use the 'Showing Progress Over Time' (SPOT) folders well to improve subject leaders' understanding and use of data to raise standards. They do this conscientiously and enjoy the responsibilities given to them.

Guidance from teachers is frequent and is helping pupils to improve. One pupil said he benefitted from the spelling lists he was asked to work on at home. In some subjects, homework is not used enough to extend pupils' learning and you are aware of the need to improve the use of home-school diaries.

Expectations are being raised and, consequently, most groups of pupils are making accelerated progress, including the more-able pupils. However, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and all pupils in the school is not closing rapidly enough. This is because disadvantaged pupils who have the potential to achieve high standards are not receiving enough targeted support and the proportion making better than expected progress is too low.

Teachers are putting new ideas into practice as a result of your observations and professional development. In the classes we visited, teachers encouraged pupils to ask questions and to find things out for themselves. As a result, pupils learnt new skills and refined their work to make it even better. For example, pupils were engaged in lively discussions and worked very hard to improve their use of persuasive language in their study of Gothic horror and Frankenstein.

The pupil support base is now a stimulating learning environment. Folders show that pupils with high levels of needs are improving their writing and numeracy skills. Senior leaders are meeting teaching assistants weekly and a programme of professional development is increasing their effectiveness. The use of the 'green

folder' to improve communication between the class teacher and the teaching assistants is a good development.

A detailed analysis is made of behaviour in each class and around the school. Pupils are helped to reflect on the consequences of their actions. The number of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced significantly. There are no permanent exclusions to date this academic year and fixed-term exclusions reduced from 14 in 2013-14 to three in 2014-15. Exclusions are avoided as far as possible.

The governors check improvement through frequent reviews, visits to the school and through the Governors' School Improvement Group which is chaired by the local authority school improvement adviser. Minutes of meetings show that governors are holding you to account. Data is scrutinised and your senior leadership team is then challenged to address any weaknesses promptly through a robust development plan.

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

You are continuing to develop staff expertise in a range of areas through good interaction with local schools and effective working with the local authority. The in-depth local authority audit and reviews and the frequent contacts with the school improvement adviser are particularly effective because they give staff and governors detailed and relevant recommendations for improvement. These reviews are also developing the monitoring skills of senior and subject leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit and the Director of Children's Services for Bedford Borough.

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector