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24 June 2015

Mr Adrian Calvert
Headteacher
The Elton High School Specialist Arts College
Walshaw Road
Bury
Lancashire
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Dear Mr Calvert

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Elton High School Specialist Arts College, Bury

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 February 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, students, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's post-inspection rapid improvement plan was evaluated. Other documentation including the local authority position statement, the pupil premium review report, the review of governance report and recent pupil progress data were scrutinised.

Main findings

Since the section 5 inspection the school has moved quickly to address the areas for improvement identified in the report. Many of the targets in the post-inspection rapid improvement plan have already been actioned and success criteria have been met,

particularly with regard to safeguarding and students' behaviour around the school. The plan rightly focuses on the close monitoring of the progress made by underachieving groups and how their needs can be met through improvements to the quality of teaching. The plan has appropriate milestones and makes clear who is responsible for carrying out actions and monitoring their effectiveness.

Central to the school's action planning is a focus on improving the quality of marking and feedback. The students I met with said that this had been effectively implemented and helped them to understand better how to improve their work. Students also commented on the higher expectations the teachers had of them, and they value the opportunity to engage in more independent work and take responsibility for their own learning.

Middle leaders are increasingly responsible for student progress. A fortnightly departmental evaluation process involving, among other things, lesson observations, work scrutiny and student voice begins in September. The aim is to closely monitor the quality of teaching and analyse the impact on outcomes across the range of students. Improved systems for the management of data are helping teachers plan more effectively to meet students' needs and intervene where underachievement is identified.

To support the progress of disadvantaged students in Year 11 the school has reviewed pastoral systems and identified key pastoral mentors to offer additional support. This review is now being rolled out across all year groups. Current data shows that the gap in achievement between disadvantaged students and their peers remains high, particularly in Year 11 and in mathematics. Although the gap is narrowing in Year 10 it remains wider in mathematics than in English.

Students commented that behaviour has improved on corridors and around the school since new behaviour systems were put in place. They enjoy being students at Elton High and particularly like their teachers, which one boy described as 'joyful'. The students I met with thought that there was little disruption to learning by the inappropriate behaviour of others and if they were to recommend any improvements, it would be to have more clubs and activities to occupy them in the lunch period.

Following the last inspection the school has undertaken a review of governance. The report gave a very positive account of the skills, expertise and commitment of the Governing Body. The recommendations from the report such as reducing the number of governors from 22 to 16, regularly updating their action file and producing a timetable for policy reviews are all underway.

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

Since the last inspection the local authority has effectively supported the school by consulting on the post-inspection rapid improvement plan; brokering a review of the use and impact of the pupil premium fund and a review of governance; and making links with a local high school and teaching school. The headteacher, a deputy headteacher, a governor and the local authority School Effectiveness Partner attended an Ofsted 'Getting to Good' seminar. It is too early to judge the full impact of these initiatives.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector