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Mrs Sharon Smith
Headteacher
Arnold Hill Academy
Gedling Road
Arnold
Nottingham
NG5 6NZ

Dear Mrs Smith

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Arnold Hill Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 2 July 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in December 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire, the Education Funding Agency (EFA), and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection, which took place in December 2013

- Improve teaching and raise achievement, particularly in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - the differing needs of individual students are met more effectively
 - teachers in all lessons provide challenging activities that demonstrate higher expectations for all students, and particularly the most able
 - all teachers regularly check students' understanding so that misconceptions are corrected and timely support is offered to those who need it most
 - positive attitudes to learning are encouraged consistently.
- Use pupil premium funding more effectively to close the gap in achievement between these and other students.
- Improve behaviour by successfully addressing low-level disruption in lessons, so that positive attitudes to learning are consistent.
- Improve leadership and management by regularly reviewing the academy's performance more critically, leading to areas of concern being addressed quickly.

Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the academy. An external review of governance, including a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 2 July 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the lead for behaviour and safety, two deputy headteachers, the assistant headteacher in charge of teaching, and subject leaders of mathematics, English and science. The inspector also visited several lessons and examined students' workbooks. In addition, the inspector reviewed the academy's documentation, including the academy improvement plan, the latest students' achievement data and behaviour logs, policies in relation to behaviour and child protection, and external reviews.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the acting Principal and substantive Principal left the academy. The heads of English, humanities and art were recruited internally. A new leadership structure was introduced, reducing the number of senior positions in the academy. A new behaviour management system was introduced. In March 2015, a new headteacher was recruited (at which point, the academy adopted the title of headteacher rather than Principal). Thirty-nine members of staff have resigned from their posts from a range of subject areas across the academy. Twenty-three new teachers have been recruited from September 2015.

The academy has an informal partnership with Trent Academies Group, which provides support for leadership and teaching. Currently, this partner is carrying out due diligence with the academy prior to formal proceedings to become the academy sponsor.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The academy has picked itself up from the low point in which it found itself at the last monitoring inspection in November 2014. The governing body took swift action to tackle the issues raised in the inspection report. It took appropriate and difficult staffing decisions to secure a more coherent leadership structure. Leaders and other staff are now clear about their roles and responsibilities and to whom they are accountable. The executive headteacher has brought considerable experience and knowledge to the academy; he has advised the governing body well and has played a critical role in developing leadership across the academy. The newly appointed headteacher has accelerated the pace of change by introducing rigorous systems for checking the work of the academy. These have given leaders an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses across the academy. For example, leaders now check on the quality of teaching regularly and provide personalised support for teachers through coaching and other development programmes.

The headteacher has rightly placed improving teaching practice at the heart of improvement plans. She has made effective use of meeting times to develop teaching across the academy. The academy makes use of all available support from partner schools. The support has had a demonstrable impact on the quality of teaching and of leadership. Teachers' assessments of students' achievement are much more reliable than before because leaders have taken effective action to make sure that the assessments are accurate. As a result, in a short period, students are making much more progress compared to last year, especially in English and mathematics. The most-able students are making good progress. Leaders have a clear view of the academy's areas for improvement; for example, greater consistency in the quality of teaching across all faculty areas and the achievement of disadvantaged students.

Members of staff with leadership responsibilities are becoming more effective. Leaders of English, mathematics and science are supported well by the senior leadership team and they know the weakness and strengths of their faculties. They carry out their role well and are developing confidence to help their team members to accept responsibility for the work they do and address any weak performance. They have ensured the reliability of the assessments of their students' work, which has allowed for better targeting of support.

The behaviour of students is improving. The leadership of this aspect is much improved compared to last year. The monitoring and tracking of behaviour incidents is now robust. The inspector saw almost no disruptions to lessons. Most students were engaged in their work and cooperative towards one another. However, some students do not always present their work with pride and this is not always tackled effectively by all teachers. By not tackling the poor presentation of work, staff undermine the high expectations set by senior leaders.

The proportion of students excluded from the academy for a fixed term is above the national average. This is because staff now enforce the behaviour codes more consistently and some students have not adapted well to the new regime. However, leaders have devised appropriate plans to support students at risk of exclusion and to help them to modify their behaviour.

The governing body continues to develop its role and effectiveness. It has a thorough understanding of the academy and works continuously to set high standards and high expectations. It has used its committees well to interrogate and challenge the information given to it by academy leaders. It maintains effective oversight of the academy's financial matters. It has made astute staffing appointments to support capacity for further improvements in the coming years.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The monitoring and tracking of students' achievement and behaviour, and of the quality of teaching

- The strong network of support from other schools.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders do not always provide clear information to the governing body about the impact of how the academy has used government funding
- The achievement of less-able students is not as high as it could be
- The gap between the achievement of students eligible for pupil premium funding and their peers', while narrowing, is still too wide, especially in English.

External support

The academy has benefited greatly from the informal partnership with the Trent Academies Group. As well as the very good support for the governing body and the headteacher provided by the executive headteacher, specialist leaders from Rushcliffe School have provided effective support for subject leaders across the academy. The headteacher gains valuable support and advice from the network of headteachers of the schools in the local area.