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25 June 2015

Mr William Smith
Headteacher
Chandlers Ridge Academy
Chandlers Ridge
Middlesbrough
TS7 0JL

Dear Mr Smith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chandlers Ridge Academy, Middlesbrough

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 academy 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:

- improve school improvement plans to link actions directly to the intended impact on pupils' outcomes, with a clear focus on who will monitor and evaluate their effectiveness
- ensure that monitoring activities by leaders are clearly linked to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection
- use current strong practice in teaching from within the academy to coach those who require support and improvement
- ensure governors focus on monitoring the impact of the leaders' planned actions to ensure rapid improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the Governing Body, an external consultant, a national leader of education headteacher and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. The school improvement plans, subject leaders' plans and the school system for checking pupil progress were evaluated. Other documents were scrutinised including the outcomes of monitoring activities, reports to governors and reports from the external consultant.

Context

The current headteacher is due to retire, therefore governors are looking at the range of options they have available to fill this position. One teacher has left since the previous inspection and two teachers have returned from maternity leave.

Main findings

After a slow start, there is now a strong desire and ambition to drive school improvement amongst senior leaders and governors. Staff morale is high and most staff are now prepared and willing to go the extra mile to make the necessary improvements.

Leaders have correctly identified actions to make the necessary improvements and have started work to address them. However, the school's action plan is not clearly focused on the intended impact on pupils' learning and outcomes. This, linked with identifying who will monitor and evaluate the actions, needs to be improved to enable governors to hold leaders more robustly to account for school improvement.

Capacity within the senior leadership team has been significantly strengthened due to senior leaders being empowered by governors to lead on school improvement. They are enthusiastic and clear about the need to improve. The deputy headteacher and subjects leaders for English and mathematics have successfully started to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They have provided training to ensure that planning is closely focused to meet the needs of all pupils. They have identified staff to visit local schools to observe good practice and this has resulted in staff sharing new ideas to improve the learning and progress of pupils in their classes. For example, progressively challenging activities in the early years and seizing opportunities for children to practice times tables have been successfully implemented after staff visited other local schools. These professional development opportunities have inspired teachers to continually look for ways to enhance all pupils' learning. Leaders have also delivered a comprehensive programme of staff training within school, aimed at using challenges in mathematics, enhancing writing skills in English and practising basic skills across the curriculum. This training has resulted in staff being better informed about what pupils need to learn to accelerate their progress, and has equipped them with the skills and resources to provide it.

Systems for checking the quality of teaching are now in place. This information is now being used to identify where individual teachers need support. An improved performance management system has been implemented and teachers are being held to account for improving pupils' outcomes.

The leadership team are appropriately developing the school's tracking of pupil progress in the light of national changes in assessment practice. Leaders and teachers are using this information in regular pupil progress and follow up meetings to identify those pupils working below where they are expected to be in order to provide appropriate support and intervention programmes. Consequently, more pupils are making better progress than they were previously.

Members of the governing body have responded positively to a review of governance and have developed an action plan to enhance their effectiveness. Governors now pose searching questions and are more confident in requesting information about the progress pupils make. They have undertaken a range of training including visiting other governing bodies to view good practice. A reorganisation of the committee structure, prompted by the review, alongside new governors joining the governing body with relevant expertise and skill, is leading to a clearer delegation of roles and responsibilities.

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

School leaders are being successfully supported by a national leader of education from a national support school. The headteacher from Normanby Primary School is effectively developing and supporting the leadership team by providing a bespoke package of support to ensure necessary improvements are being made swiftly. Recent local authority involvement has ensured that local schools, where there is good practice, have been identified to work with the academy on the areas which need to be improved. They have also provided effective support to the early years leader ensuring provision is focused on learning. In addition, officers from the local authority have confirmed the academy's assessment of children's and pupils' work.

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

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Lithgow

Her Majesty's Inspector