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Mr Brendan English
Principal
Khalsa Science Academy
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Dear Mr English

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Khalsa Science Academy

Following my visit to your school on 12 November 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 June 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 in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also spoke with representatives from the Trinity Academy, Halifax about the support they provide through an arrangement brokered by the Khalsa Academy Trust. I held telephone conversations with the Chair of the Governing Body, the Department for Education (DfE) adviser and with a representative from the Leeds School Improvement Team, with whom you have been working. I scrutinised academy documents, reviewed reports from the partnership working with Noctua Teaching Alliance and evaluated the academy's improvement action plans. We observed teaching together, and I observed

breaktimes and held conversations with pupils and parents. I also examined the work in pupils' books alongside senior leaders.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, two teachers, one permanent and one temporary, have joined the academy. A teaching assistant has also been appointed and some restructuring of existing staff has taken place. The executive consultant headteacher working with the academy at the time of the previous inspection has left. The academy is now working in partnership with the Leeds School Improvement Service, the Noctua Teaching Alliance and the White Rose Maths Multi Academy Trust (MAT) Hub. The number on roll has risen and the academy now has three classes.

Main findings

Leaders are united in their ambition and determination to take the academy from 'requires improvement' to 'good' and beyond. There is a renewed sense of urgency and a strong commitment to address the previous inspection report findings in a timely and thorough manner.

The academy's improvement plan is clearly tied to the areas for improvement detailed in the previous inspection report. However, planning contains insufficient detail to allow senior leaders or governors to measure the progress of actions over time effectively. For example, one priority action is to analyse 'rigorously' how well different groups of pupils are doing, but neither pupil groups nor quantifiable targets are defined.

You have put in place robust systems for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning, guaranteeing that raised expectations are communicated clearly by leaders. You have also ensured that teachers are being held more accountable for the achievement of pupils in their classes. For example, teachers are using a new tracking system which has helped senior leaders to keep a check on the progress of individual pupils and groups. Furthermore, you are training teachers to lead and manage teaching assistants' performance management in order to increase the impact of this group of staff.

Planned professional development also focuses sharply on the priority areas for improvement, for example teachers' questioning skills and further mathematics training. However, the quantity of new initiatives in place are, at times, presenting a challenge for leaders and governors to ensure that key improvement priorities remain central and are not swamped by the amount of wide-ranging advice and support that the academy is receiving.

The academy's partnership with Trinity Academy, Halifax from the White Rose MAT Hub is having a positive impact on the teaching and learning of mathematics as well as the tracking of pupils' progress in mathematics. Although the mathematics

specialist from the Hub primarily supports the work in Key Stage 1, training has been delivered to all academy staff, meaning that the benefits are academy-wide. For example, teachers in all classes are incorporating regular problem-solving opportunities into lessons and pupils are tackling mathematical challenges with improved confidence and ability. These skills are also serving pupils well in subjects other than mathematics.

Marking and feedback shows signs of improvement, particularly within mathematics, because all teachers are adhering to the academy's policy. Middle leaders, who worked alongside me to look at pupils' work, identified accurately the next steps for further improvement. These included the need to increase consistency in feedback and marking across different subjects in order to raise attainment across the curriculum. This example of improved leadership skill and practice is having a positive impact on raising standards.

Governors are taking action to ensure that they are better informed and are holding leaders to account more pointedly. Governors have requested and received reports from leaders other than the headteacher and have visited the academy to monitor practice in a more focused manner, using the previous inspection report findings to inform their work.

Academy leaders lack experience in securing high-quality outcomes for early years children and do not hold high enough expectations of this group of learners. In recognition of this, academy leaders have brokered external support from the Noctua Teaching Alliance. This has resulted in the early years leader receiving regular, experienced mentoring and this is impacting on the quality of teaching and learning. Opportunities for daily outdoor play and learning, for example, are now in place.

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 academy is being supported by a number of external bodies brokered by the Khalsa Academy Trust. Trinity Academy, Halifax from the White Rose MAT hub is predominantly supporting the academy with training, for teaching and learning in mathematics. The Noctua Teaching Alliance is working with the academy to improve and develop the early years. Visible changes to the learning environment as well as teaching practice are attributable to this partnership. The Leeds School Improvement Team is also working with the academy to secure improvements in leadership and management and regular meetings are enabling robust challenge and securing accountability.

A representative from the Department of Education has also been in regular communication with the academy to monitor improvement measures and outcomes.

Given the wide range of supportive partnerships in place, academy leaders find themselves, at times, conflicted and inundated with advice.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector