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Gordon Inglis
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Dear Mr Inglis

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Bolsover School

Following my visit to your academy on 19 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2014. 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, I met with you and other senior leaders, and four members of the governing body, including the Chair, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I made short visits to lessons to review the behaviour of pupils in class and observed behaviour during breaktime. I considered a range of documentation, including action plans, behaviour logs, monitoring records, records of external advisers and minutes of the governing body's meetings. I scrutinised the safeguarding policy and the single central record. I spoke formally with a group of Year 10 pupils and informally with others at breaktime.

Context

Since the previous inspection, two new senior leaders have been appointed: one with responsibility for data, recording and reporting, and the other with responsibility for raising the achievement of pupils entitled to pupil premium funding. New heads of department have been appointed to the geography and history departments. Three members of staff have left, a new design technology teacher and a new science teacher have been appointed. You have appointed a new special educational needs coordinator. Two new additional specialist leaders in education have been designated: one in English and one in business and finance.

Main findings

Since the previous monitoring inspection, you and senior leaders have drawn up and implemented a new behaviour policy, called 'Be Brilliant'. This new policy has an emphasis on positive discipline and encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour. It ensures that teachers address instances of poor behaviour swiftly and consistently. Pupils who spoke with me told me that the new policy is having a positive impact on behaviour. Lessons are calmer and pupils feel better able to concentrate. Their views were borne out by my visits to lessons, in which the vast majority of pupils were on task and displaying positive attitudes to learning. Records of behaviour monitoring show that incidents of removal from lessons are reducing over time.

You are working effectively with partner schools to develop alternatives to exclusion. For example, you have set up new alternative provision for pupils at Key Stage 3 who may be at risk of permanent exclusion. Rates of exclusion in the academy remain well below national averages.

Pupils and staff are highly committed to the values of equality and diversity that the academy promotes so effectively. Pupils who spoke with me described their school as 'friendly and welcoming, where everyone is accepted for who they are'. They were unequivocal in their view that bullying is rare and always dealt with, and appreciate the positive and friendly relationships they enjoy with their teachers. These were very much in evidence during my visit. Pupils are confident that they all have someone to turn to if they do have worries or concerns, and know that their teachers will listen to them.

Pupils generally take good care of their books and the presentation of their work is usually good. Regular monitoring of lessons rightly focuses on this aspect of behaviour to ensure that all teachers have the same high expectations for the presentation of pupils' work.

Safeguarding remains effective. All checks on staff are carried out rigorously. Staff and governors are aware of and take very seriously their duties under the Prevent act, and are alert to any possible signs of pupils who may be at risk. The academy

continues to promote British values effectively, for example through the development of the Bolsover British values passport, which outlines the values the academy expects all pupils to uphold.

The quality of teaching continues to improve as a result of a more rigorous programme of quality assurance. This now takes a wider range of evidence into account when judging the quality of teaching, including the progress made by different groups of pupils, the quality of work in pupils' books, the quality of marking and feedback and the teacher's performance against the national standards. You also take account of what pupils tell you about teaching. You have established a set of 'core expectations' that should be in place for every lesson, and you check during your regular learning walks and lesson observations that these are in place. You use information from these observations to identify the further improvements that are needed, so that the support put in place for teachers focuses much more closely on their individual needs.

The new marking scheme ensures that teachers give useful feedback to pupils, although not all teachers follow the academy's policy in allowing time for pupils to use this feedback to improve their work.

You have developed good links with partner schools, and have joined the Redhill Teaching School Alliance to ensure that your staff have access to high quality professional development. Four members of staff have been accredited as outstanding practitioners through the outstanding teacher programme and are now leading on improving teaching in the academy. The designated specialist leaders of education are leading improvements both in-house and in partner schools. For example, one is leading on accelerated reader schemes in the academy and with feeder primary schools.

You have introduced a number of initiatives to improve pupils' literacy, such as 'Everyone Reading in Class' (ERIC). You are aware that there is more to be done to improve boys' literacy and to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to practise their mathematical skills across the curriculum. While provisional results from the summer examinations show improvement, particularly in mathematics, there is more to be done to ensure that attainment across all subjects is equally strong.

There is, now, greater evidence of challenge for the most-able pupils through the 'reach for a star' programme and in the more challenging targets being set for these pupils in particular. In mathematics, the most-able pupils now have the opportunity to study statistics and further mathematics in after-school sessions.

Since the previous inspection you have made significant improvements to leadership at all levels. You have further strengthened leadership through the appointment of additional senior leaders who are effectively leading on key areas of the academy's work.

Four leaders have completed the national professional qualification in senior leadership and seven have completed the national professional qualification in middle leadership. These leaders are managing projects that contribute to whole-school improvement and are linked to the academy improvement plan. As a result, the rate of improvement is gathering pace across the academy.

Governance

Since the previous monitoring inspection, you have carried out an external review of governance that identified some key strengths in governance, as well as areas for further development. In response to this, governors drew up their own action plan and carried out a skills audit to identify any remaining gaps in their knowledge and skills. At each governors' meeting, you provide governors with a 'score card' that provides them with progress reports against the academy's action plan. Their role in evaluating progress against the action plan is now much clearer.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Leaders and directors have wisely recognised the need to develop strategic partnerships with local good and outstanding schools to accelerate the progress the academy is making. This has included high quality training for teachers and leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Duignan
Her Majesty's Inspector