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Mr Kevin Dodd
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Dodd

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kibblesworth Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 15 December 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 first monitoring inspection since the academy 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school. The academy should take immediate action to:

- sharpen improvement plans so that they very clearly define measurable differences that actions are intended to have on the quality of teaching and outcomes for all groups of pupils over time
- ensure that governors are regularly provided with easily understood, accurate information, particularly with regard to the performance of pupils in comparison to national standards, to enable effective challenge and support
- make precise judgements about teaching and learning with greater emphasis on pupils' progress, being very exact about what teachers need to do to improve their impact on outcomes for different groups, and in particular the most-able pupils.

Evidence

During the monitoring inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body and representatives of the local authority with whom the academy has been working to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The academy improvement and action plans were evaluated as well as the academy's self-evaluation statements. I visited all classes with you, looked at pupils' work and talked to pupils. I scrutinised the academy's assessment and tracking documents as well as other school documentation, for example the outcomes of monitoring activities and the impact of performance management.

Context

Since the previous inspection five new governors have joined the governing body. The academy has opted to work with the local authority to secure improvement and access several services including the support of a school improvement partner.

Main findings

Improvement planning is imprecise. Actions and success criteria are not sufficiently detailed or measurable to facilitate improved teaching and outcomes for all groups of pupils. The approaches used to monitor and evaluate the impact of improvement work are not appropriately robust and are thereby ineffective in securing rapid progress against the previous inspection report recommendations.

Governors commissioned the external review of their work quickly and are keen to develop their skills and practices in order to support the academy's improvement. To this end, they have been conducting more regular monitoring visits to the academy. However, due to the lack of clarity in your reports and presentations, governors are not able to judge for themselves what current information is telling them about the rate of progress. This has meant that governors are unable to effectively challenge and support academy leaders.

The improving use of assessment and tracking systems by senior leaders is easing identification and discussion about the progress of different groups of pupils. However, some staff and governors do not have a thorough understanding of these systems. Given that almost six months have elapsed since the previous inspection, it is essential that all parties are quickly equipped with the skills and knowledge to make better use of assessment and tracking information in order to understand exactly where gaps and strengths lie.

Visits to classes and work in pupils' books indicate inconsistencies in teaching and learning. Feedback and marking are being more consistently applied by teachers across several areas of the curriculum and, where teaching is strengthening, tasks are being more appropriately matched to pupils' needs as well as their interests. Despite these signs of progress, more-able pupils continue to be underchallenged in

all key stages and overall expectations for pupils remain too low. This is particularly apparent in the early years, where Nursery and Reception children enter the academy with broadly typical capabilities.

You quickly commissioned a review of the academy's spending to support disadvantaged pupils and this has presented leaders with a plan to improve outcomes for this group. However, despite the recommendation from the review that targets be defined accurately, quantifiable measures are not tight enough. When and by how much this group of pupils will prosper across the coming year in reading, writing and mathematics remains loose and although some analysis of outcomes has been made, this is insufficiently robust to inform further actions or to secure accountability.

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

The academy has been proactive in securing support from external partners. Leaders have chosen to work in partnership with the local authority. The local authority has invited academy leaders to participate in a range of professional development sessions. These opportunities have enabled the academy to be more outward-looking and have contributed to senior leaders developing a growing appreciation of national standards against which to measure the academy's performance. However, the impact of work with external partners has not had sufficient impact to enable the academy to tackle weaknesses at a rapid enough rate in the sixth months since the previous inspection.

Similarly, the outcomes of a review of governance, while helping governors to develop their skills in planning for improvement, have not so far contributed substantially to the academy's progress against the recommendations of the previous report.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector