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Miss Melanie Wight
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Dear Miss Wight

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Redby Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 14 January 2016, 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good academy.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the human resources manager and the Chair of the Governing Body, to discuss the actions being taken to improve the academy since the last inspection. I undertook a learning walk with you and your deputy headteacher to observe teaching. I met a group of pupils to discuss their learning and any changes they had identified since the last inspection. I examined the academy improvement plan as well as other documents, including self-evaluation documents and governing body reports. I also carried out a joint work scrutiny with middle leaders.

Context

Three new teachers were appointed in September 2015. One has since resigned and a temporary teacher has been appointed from January 2016. The roles of three teaching assistants were made permanent in October 2015.

Main Findings

The headteacher, working in partnership with the deputy headteacher and the executive headteacher, is establishing a shared commitment to sustained improvement and is improving the effectiveness of leadership across the school. Middle leaders are taking increasing responsibility for the monitoring of teaching and outcomes, and intervening swiftly when areas of underperformance are identified. Senior and middle leaders hold regular pupil progress meetings that are increasing the accountability of teachers for pupils' outcomes over time. These actions have contributed to the significant improvement in pupils' outcomes in 2015.

Leaders have initiated more rigorous assessment. This is leading to improved rates of progress as teachers have a better understanding of starting points and the skills and understanding pupils need to acquire in order to improve. A shared book scrutiny with middle leaders revealed that they have a clear view of standards. In lessons, some teachers use questioning and observation to quickly identify whether pupils understand key learning points and deftly adjust their teaching accordingly. Some teachers are less receptive to using assessment information to adjust planning and this means some pupils are not being moved on to the next stage of their learning when they are clearly ready to progress.

Pupils are receiving more time to act upon the good feedback they receive from teachers and this is leading to an improvement in the quality of their work. Pupils have a clear understanding of the feedback they receive from teachers and this is helping them to improve their work. The work in books is well presented with good standards of cursive handwriting. Some high-quality extended writing is evident, although there are instances where pupils do not receive good-quality help and guidance to improve their spelling.

The impact of work to improve teaching was evident in both English and mathematics lessons, where topics such as algebra and spelling were enlivened by deep questioning, peer discussion and a healthy sense of competition. Some less successful teaching provided too much direction with fewer opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and, combined with slow-paced activities, resulted in less rapid progress.

Improvements in leadership and the closer monitoring of teaching and classroom support contributed to improved outcomes in 2015. Children in the early years continue to achieve good levels of development above those of children nationally. In Key Stage 1, pupils achieved much higher scores in the phonics (sounds that letters make) screening test, with boys performing particularly well and the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers closing. Attainment in reading,

writing and mathematics improved significantly. Disadvantaged pupils made better progress than their non-disadvantaged peers. Current progress indicates that improving outcomes are being sustained, although further work is needed to address the slower improvements in writing.

More accurate assessment is helping to give governors more reliable information with which to hold the school to account. The Chair of the Governing Body attends pupils' progress meetings and challenges leaders on the interventions needed to tackle underachievement. Primary specialists from the Academy Trust participate in work scrutiny and moderation tasks. The future direction of governance is currently being reviewed and it is important that this is concluded in good time so that the expertise and experience governors can bring helps to sustain an improving picture.

In order for the school to improve further, inconsistencies in teachers' use of assessment information need to be ironed out. In particular, all teachers need to be able to swiftly adapt their teaching to respond to the changing nature of pupils' needs. A closer alignment of the actions in the school improvement plan with expected outcomes for pupils would help leaders to check more rigorously on pupils' achievement and teachers' effectiveness.

External support

The school has continued to work closely with The Wearmouth Learning Trust and Monkwearmouth School to develop leadership and the monitoring of teaching. The school has worked with Sunderland local authority and particularly with Durham Education Development Service to develop teaching and learning and moderate the accuracy of teachers' assessments.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Advisory Body and the Chair of the Wearmouth Learning Trust, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Sunderland City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector