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12 October 2015

Mrs Alison Mobbs
Principal
Lynn Grove Academy
Lynn Grove
Great Yarmouth
NR31 8AP

Dear Mrs Mobbs

Requires improvement: monitoring visit to Lynn Grove Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 22 September 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 May 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 visit, I met with you and other senior leaders, four middle leaders, the Chair and another member of the governing body. I also met with two representatives from the Creative Education Trust to discuss the actions being taken to improve the academy. I scrutinised a range of documents, including your self-evaluation and improvement plan. An opportunity to walk the academy with you enabled me to see pupils at work in lessons.

Context

Since the last inspection, 17 new teachers have joined the academy, seven of whom are newly qualified. A new assistant vice-principal has joined the senior leadership team and a new head of English started this term.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders are taking prompt action to strengthen your monitoring procedures and make closer checks on the quality of teaching. Two of your senior leaders share responsibility for managing the development of teaching and for measuring the impact this has on pupils' learning. These procedures are new but are already providing you with a much clearer picture of the overall effectiveness of your staff. You are also monitoring and evaluating the rate of improvement being made and are using your findings to inform the academy's revised improvement plan.

Monitoring of teaching includes weekly learning walks, the findings of which are shared with staff to highlight what is done well and what needs further improvement. This is supplemented with formal lesson observations as part of the academy's procedures for managing teachers' performance. You are rightly prioritising observing the new staff who joined the academy this term to gain an accurate view of their effectiveness and gauge what support they may need.

Recent training and development opportunities have involved staff in using information on pupils' progress effectively and adding further challenge in lessons for the most-able students. Further training and coaching is tailored to meet the specific needs of teachers. Middle leaders, particularly subject leaders, have benefited from training provided by advisers from the academy sponsor. The combination of training and greater scrutiny of teaching and checks on pupils' learning is encouraging all staff to reflect on their practice and consider how they can improve further.

Our learning walk confirmed that improvements in teaching are underway but that more needs to be done to gain greater consistency. Agreed non-negotiables in planning, behaviour management and organisation are in place. In Key Stage 4 English, teachers are providing additional challenge for the most-able pupils and are improving the quality of their marking to help the pupils improve.

Expectations are rising, but are not always high enough. In mathematics, for example, not all younger pupils are challenged fully because teachers plan work that is too easy. In design technology, tasks are challenging enough but pupils are not set clear timescales in which to complete work promptly to a high quality. In history, teachers mark pupils' books but do not always correct basic spelling and grammatical errors to help them spot their mistakes and correct them.

The percentage of Year 11 pupils attaining five or more good-quality GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, rose to over 50% this year. Significantly, a much higher proportion of these pupils made the progress expected of them, especially in mathematics. Performance information confirms that pupils in other year groups are making improved progress. You and your senior leaders acknowledge that more needs to be done with the pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve equally as well as others.

The governing body continues to fulfil its statutory duties. Governors provide the academy with support and challenge and feel that there are no barriers preventing the academy from being judged good at its next inspection.

External support

The academy has not sought additional external support because it is able to draw on the wider resources of the Trust to steer its improvement. The guidance, support and increased accountability from the sponsor Trust is adding rigour to the academy's monitoring procedures and improvement planning.

I recommend that further action is taken to:

- analyse in detail how effectively funding is being used to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils to ensure that they have every opportunity to achieve equally as well as others.

Ofsted will continue monitoring of the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of the Creative Education Trust.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector