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Huw Derrick
Interim Principal
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Dear Mr Derrick

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ormiston Park Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 8 October 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 April 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 academy.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the Executive principal, other senior leaders, three groups of students, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the trust, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also visited a small number of lessons to observe students' learning and to look at their books. I evaluated the academy improvement plan. I also scrutinised the academy's records of recruitment checks on staff.

Context

Since the previous inspection, 10 teachers have left the academy, of which five were subject leaders. Replacements have been appointed for all of the subject leaders. The Executive principal's time in the academy has been increased from one to two days per week. The Interim Executive Board has been replaced by a local governing body.

Main findings

Your academy improvement plan is well written and rightly identifies key actions, which aim to secure improvement during this academic year. It is clear who will lead each improvement initiative and how you plan to evaluate the success of these. Procedures for reporting on progress made against the planned actions are clear, and will enable members of the progress board and the governing body to hold senior leaders to account.

Students' outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 improved in 2015, with 40% of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics. The proportion of students making expected progress improved in both English and mathematics. The academy should now focus on increasing the proportion of students who make better-than-expected progress in these subjects.

Senior leaders with whom I met spoke confidently about the impact their actions are starting to have on driving improvement and they are aware of what still needs to be achieved. Teachers are now being actively encouraged to be more adventurous and to experiment with different styles of teaching. I observed a range of effective teaching styles during my visits to lessons, all of which engaged students in their learning. You are also aware of the need to gather a wider range of evidence to inform your judgements on the quality of teaching over time, to include scrutiny of students' books, discussions with students and a detailed analysis of students' outcomes.

You are making better use of your more effective middle leaders to support newly appointed subject leaders and to tackle weaker teaching. You have adopted a more collaborative approach towards working with subject leaders. Hence, they feel more involved in key decisions that affect the academy. You have also made middle leaders more accountable through your systematic subject reviews.

My scrutiny of students' books and discussions with students show that the vast majority of teachers are using your new marking system effectively in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science initially. This system is planned to be adopted by other subjects over the course of this term. Students welcome the improved feedback given by their teachers. You have ambitious plans to make students more responsible for their own learning. Your new personalised approach

aims to ensure that students negotiate more individualised targets to give them greater ownership of their learning, and to ensure that teachers make better use of these targets when planning for learning.

You have rightly highlighted the importance of good attendance to your students, and your information on the attendance of different groups of students demonstrates a welcome improvement compared to the same time last year. The number of recorded incidents relating to poor behaviour has also declined, although you acknowledge that tackling the poor behaviour of some Year 8 students remains a priority for the academy.

Members of the governing body have a range of skills to help them challenge and support the academy. They have wisely linked specific governors to different sections of the academy improvement plan in order to monitor its implementation. Due to the high proportion of disadvantaged students in the academy and the significant number of children in care, the governing body would do well to nominate a designated governor to ensure that these students achieve as well as they should.

External support

The trust has added to the existing leadership capacity by recruiting an Executive principal for two days per week and by providing an experienced education advisor who works with the academy for 10 to 15 days per year. Members of the trust hold leaders to account well through the half-termly progress board meetings. Subject leadership is supported well through a range of national networking meetings across the schools within the trust. The trust also supports governance effectively by providing a variety of training and development packages.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Thurrock and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector