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Mrs Emma Howard
Head of School
Alfreton Grange Arts College
Grange Street
Alfreton
Derbyshire
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Dear Mrs Howard

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Alfreton Grange Arts College

Following my visit to your school on 14 June 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in September 2015. The first monitoring inspection took place on 26 April 2016. This second monitoring inspection took place in order to assess the quality of planning that senior leaders, the interim executive board, the Torch Academy Gateway Trust and the David Nieper Education Trust have in place to ensure the school's smooth transition to academy status. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The planning in place to ensure the effective transition of the school towards academy status is fit for purpose.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in September 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the outcomes for all pupils and reduce the gaps more rapidly between boys and girls, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and their peers, by ensuring that teachers:
 - use the information they have on pupils to plan learning that challenges them
 - engage pupils better by capturing their curiosity and enthusiasm through relevant activities
 - check how well pupils are learning and make sure that the findings from this activity are used to decide the next steps for pupils' learning
 - help pupils to develop the skills needed to become successful learners and to make better use of the opportunities provided to them.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - improving weaker teaching and providing opportunities for teachers to explore how to make their teaching effective
 - making sure that new initiatives are understood and routines and expectations to make them successful are followed by everyone
 - ensuring that plans put in place to address the underachievement by boys, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those studying science have a positive impact
 - ensuring that the extended day is used to secure better achievement and enjoyment by staff and pupils.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 14 June 2016.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the current headteacher, the executive headteacher, senior leaders in charge of curriculum and assessment, the chair of the interim executive board and the chair of trustees for the David Nieper Education Trust. I spoke with the headteacher who is due to take up post on 1 September 2016 when the school becomes an academy.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit that took place in April 2016, the headteacher has left the school. You are the temporary head of school. The executive headteacher is providing leadership support. The incoming headteacher is in school for two days a week.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Much has happened since the last monitoring inspection. The incoming headteacher is now in the school for two days a week in order to establish the systems and structures needed for the new school. She is working closely with current leaders and has shown impressive levels of sensitivity and commitment to ensure that the transition the school makes to an academy is smooth. The chair of trustees for the David Nieper Education Trust is working with the current interim executive board to ensure the continuity of governance arrangements.

Planning for the school's transition to become an academy is in place. The school improvement plan has been improved. The timelines for when key actions should happen are sharper and there is more detail about the planned impact that actions will have. This plan is expected to form the basis of the academy's improvement plan moving forward.

There has been little staff turnover and the school is fully staffed for September 2016. This will provide continuity for pupils who will already know their teachers as the school changes to become an academy. The curriculum for September 2016 is also now agreed. The incoming headteacher is right to make sure that pupils enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum. She has insisted that pupils within key stage 3 have additional opportunity to study modern foreign languages and music. Planned actions to support pupils, due to sit their GCSE examinations in 2017, are comprehensive. The curriculum for these pupils has already been adapted to address their learning needs. Within the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, specialist subject teaching and intervention are in place.

The systems to track pupils' performance have improved. The tracking of the progress made by those pupils identified for special educational needs support is now fit for purpose. Leaders know that the identification of pupils who require special educational needs support is not good enough. The support these pupils receive must improve. Leaders understand the sense of urgency to address this issue and have plans in place.

There is still work to do to make sure that pupils make the progress that they should. The school data predicts that GCSE outcomes for the current Year 11 will improve in 2016. GCSE outcomes are predicted to be even better for the current Year 10 pupils when they sit their exams in 2017. However, there is still underperformance in mathematics. Not enough pupils make more than the expected progress. Too few pupils achieve an A* or A grade at GCSE level and there remains inconsistency as to how well groups of pupils achieve across the subjects they study.

The school has undergone significant change. Pupils will have a new uniform and will move into their new school building in January 2017. Leaders are clear that 'this school is on the up!' They rightly identify that pupils' results need to improve in order to ensure this.