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Mr Qamar Riaz
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Dear Mr Riaz

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tamworth Enterprise College and AET Academy

Following my visit to your school on 30 April 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- embed fully and analyse effectively any improvement strategies for their impact on pupils' progress and well-being
- improve urgently the quality of teaching in all subject areas, especially in non-core subjects
- ensure that teachers plan lessons that take account of pupils' needs and abilities, especially the most able pupils, so that they have access to work that is closely matched to their capabilities

- ensure that all staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy, both in and out of lesson time.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders and members of the governing board, including the chair of governors. A telephone meeting was held with the Academies Enterprise Trust's (AET) national director for secondary schools. The school's improvement and self-evaluation documents were evaluated. The lead inspector and senior leaders visited classrooms in English, science, mathematics, IT and MFL during learning walks, looked at pupils' books, work and sought pupils' views in discussions. The lead inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, lesson changeover times and breaktime and spoke to many of them about their school. Staff were able to share their views in informal discussions with the lead inspector.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the trust has appointed a new executive principal who commenced his post in January 2019. Many staff have left the academy and new ones have joined, most notably the middle leaders in charge of English, mathematics and science. The academy suffered and continues to suffer from staffing turbulence, especially in non-core subjects.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have not acted swiftly enough to address the shortcomings in the school. Consequently, outcomes for pupils and the standard of education are not improving rapidly enough. The trust has increased its efforts and support and, as a result, changes are now visible. For example, they appointed you as new executive principal in January 2019, to accelerate the rate of improvements. You are acutely aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have an accurate view of how well the school is performing. You are driven to improve the school. Most, if not all, improvement strategies have very recently been introduced, namely in February or March of this year. Therefore, these strategies are not yet embedded fully, nor have they had time to have a positive effect. It is simply too soon to see the impact of these actions on pupils' progress and well-being.

Currently, the quality of teaching is too mixed across the school. While the teaching in core subjects is improving, it remains variable and even weak in some areas across the curriculum. Pupils, especially the most able pupils, do not benefit from work that stretches their thinking or allows them to deepen their knowledge. In some circumstances, most-able pupils are not given access to top-grade questions. This is because some staff have still not focused sufficiently enough on ensuring that pupils make strong progress from their different starting points and continue to focus on attainment. Pupils agree that teaching is variable across the school. Most

say that it is beginning to improve, especially in English and mathematics but not in other subjects. Pupils are worried that they have had numerous or non-specialist teachers in some of their option subjects and, as a result, have fallen behind. Some pupils have fallen so far behind in their option subjects that it is unlikely that they will catch up or be successful in their upcoming GCSE examinations. Pupils are concerned about this; as some Year 11 pupils put it, 'It's getting better now, but too late for us.'

Recent improvements made by you in changing the culture and ethos of the school are evident. However, there remains a small group of staff who do not support the improvement drive. This is causing additional challenges as not all staff are consistent in their approach to dealing with pupils. For example, some staff do not enforce the 'no mobile phones in school' policy. As a result, some pupils congregate around the areas where staff allow the use of phones and refuse to put them away when prompted by other staff.

Although behaviour in lessons is improving, a minority of pupils continue to choose not to follow the new behaviour expectations and not all staff consistently deal with these pupils. Consequently, the number of pupils who have been isolated internally has risen this academic year. Fixed-term exclusions have risen. This is because some teachers do not take responsibility for consistently challenging and dealing with pupils' behaviour that falls short of the new, higher expectations. Senior leaders' analysis of types of behaviour infringements is not helpful in determining trends or patterns. This means that they are not able to say if the severity of behaviour incidents is improving over time.

The governing body is now more effective in supporting you and other senior leaders. A new chair of governors has brought a range of experiences and expertise to the role. It is now evident that the governing body is providing an adequate level of support and challenge to you and your colleagues. They know the school well and understand the challenges you are faced with. The multi-academy trust's system leader also provides effective support and mentoring to you and your colleagues. Her work has included monitoring of teaching and brokering staff training, about which most staff are complimentary.

Work to provide pupils with independent careers advice and guidance is beginning to have a positive impact on ensuring that pupils are well prepared for their next steps. Key stage 4 pupils comment positively on the new careers adviser and the varied opportunities they have had to visit universities or meet potential employers. Current Year 10 pupils are set to complete work experience in the summer term. However, this work to ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next steps has not yet cascaded down into key stage 3. Currently, the evaluation and analysis of the impact of the work are not as robust as they should be. For example, leaders do not routinely evaluate the sessions and are not able to say which careers events had the most impact on pupils and which ones pupils found less helpful.

External support

You have engaged effectively with support provided by other secondary schools in the MAT. For example, the system leader has ensured that middle leaders work closely together and that pupils' work is moderated to ensure accuracy of assessments. You and your colleagues have acted on many of the suggestions made by colleagues from other settings. A clear strength is your outward-facing approach to ensure that you improve the school and the life chances of your pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bianka Zemke
Her Majesty's Inspector