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6 May 2015

Mr Phil Davies
Headteacher
Prospect School
Cockney Hill
Tilehurst
Reading
RG30 4EX

Dear Mr Davies

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Prospect School

Following my visit to your academy on 5 May 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 January 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. The academy should take further action to:

- ensure students respond in a meaningful way to the feedback they receive from teachers about how to improve their work
- ensure effective steps are taken to improve the attendance of those disadvantaged students who are persistently absent.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated a range of documentation including the school action plan, information relating to the monitoring of teaching and information about the progress students are making. You took me on a tour of the academy and we made brief visits to a

number of classes where I spoke to students about their work and looked at their books.

Context

Since the last inspection one teacher has left the academy. Four new members of staff have been appointed for September 2015; a deputy headteacher with responsibility for achievement in Key Stage 3, a head of year and lead teachers for English and mathematics.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have accepted the inspection judgements. You have reviewed and amended the academy improvement plan effectively to show how and when the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report will be addressed. Crucially, you have added important milestones so that leaders and governors can check the progress the academy is making at key points along the way. Additionally, the plan sets out what governors' roles will be in providing challenge to senior leaders about whether rapid improvement is being made.

The system for tracking students' progress is now well developed. As a result, all teachers have comprehensive information about how well students are doing. Teachers use this information more effectively to plan lessons that match a range of students' needs. Teachers explain more clearly to students what they need to do to be successful and how to achieve higher grades. Students are challenged more because teachers have higher expectations of students. Current assessment information shows Year 11 students are making better progress. Progress is strongest in English and weaker in science. Despite a variety of appropriate actions by senior leaders, the recruitment and retention of high quality science teachers remains a challenge for the academy. Frequent trial examinations in recent months have helped ensure that assessments of students' achievement are accurate. Gaps are closing between disadvantaged students and their classmates. However, the persistent absence of some disadvantaged students is a barrier to them making good progress.

Teachers increasingly focus on providing clear feedback to students about how to improve their work. As a result, students' books show they are being given frequent and detailed guidance about what to improve. However, the extent to which students respond to this feedback to improve their work varies too much.

The quality of teaching is improving. Teachers are benefitting from a range of tailored training and support. Senior leaders are using their knowledge about the quality of teaching effectively to ensure that teachers receive relevant professional development. The academy has plans in place to work in partnership with other Reading schools to provide further opportunities for teachers to share good practice and develop their skills.

Minutes of governing body meetings show governors are challenging senior leaders more effectively and frequently about the progress that is being made. As a result of the last inspection, the headteacher's targets have been reviewed and rewritten to provide more rigour and to ensure they are more closely matched to the key areas identified for improvement. Governors are linked to individual departments in the academy and this is giving them valuable opportunities to check at first hand what senior leaders are telling them.

Reviews of the use of pupil premium funding (additional government funding) and of governance are planned to take place in the coming weeks.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Local authority advisers have provided useful training for teachers focused on effective behaviour management. Teachers who have joined the academy in recent months have particularly benefitted from this training as it has helped them to establish effective routines and expectations of students' behaviour. Independent consultants have carried out a comprehensive review of science provision which is being used effectively by senior leaders to plan for the development of the department.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Reading and the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Moore

Her Majesty's Inspector