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Mr Eric Winstone
Ormiston Bushfield Academy
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Dear Mr Winstone

Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of Ormiston Bushfield Academy

Introduction

Following my visit to your academy on 10 May 2011 with John Mitcheson HMI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents including those concerned with safeguarding, met with the Principal and leaders, nominated staff, groups of students, and a representative of the governing body. In addition, a total of 21 classes were observed, and this included scrutiny of students' work and their learning in class.

Context

Ormiston Bushfield Academy opened in September 2009. It is smaller than average, with 737 students, 91 of whom are in the sixth form. It specialises in sport, performing arts and mathematics. It serves students living in the immediate area, where the level of deprivation is high. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average, as is the proportion that have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of students are White British and very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The

majority of teachers from the predecessor school transferred to the academy. Since then, five teachers have left and a number of new appointments have been made, including seven new middle leaders, four house assistants, a data manager and a senior leader. The academy holds the Silver Charter Mark for inclusion and the Artsmark Gold award.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

On entry, the proportion of students with low prior attainment is much higher than average. There are relatively few students with the above average prior attainment but this is, nevertheless, a significant group. The academy has been quick to identify these issues and is moving rapidly to address them. The quality of provision is improving quickly and this is reflected in the accelerating improvements in achievement and standards.

The academy has rightly prioritised the attainment of Year 11 students. Intensive programmes of support have resulted in marked increases in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. In 2010, this nearly doubled the results from the predecessor school, with 42% gaining good passes when English and mathematics are included. Current data indicate that these proportions should improve further in 2011. Though attainment is currently below national average, the gap is closing quickly. Girls attain significantly higher standards than boys and this is recognised by the academy as a priority area to address.

Improvements in attainment are matched by improvements in progress, which accelerates as pupils move from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. Classroom observations confirm this trend. However, the academy recognises that many students enter with weak learning skills and often find it difficult to apply themselves. In the sixth form, students quickly develop independent learning skills because they are given opportunities to do so both within class and in free time.

Those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make significantly better progress than their peers because of the very effective support that they receive. Similarly, those students known to be eligible for free school meals achieve well. Students in the sixth form make progress that is around that expected, attaining standards that in line with national averages.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students are polite and helpful and, during the inspection visit, inspectors found that behaviour around the academy to be good. Bullying is rare and, when it occurs, students say that it is dealt with effectively. In class, students are generally compliant although some learning is disrupted by poor behaviour in a small minority of lessons. Learning skills including literacy are not well developed, and students are often slow to become effective and independent learners as they progress through

the academy. Attendance is close to the national average and is stable. The number of persistent absences is low, with a declining trend. The number of exclusions is very low.

The effectiveness of provision

Lesson observations carried out by HMI, including some done jointly with senior leaders, confirmed the academy's positive view of the improving quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement. Teachers share good relations with students and, in general, they manage behaviour effectively. Most use their detailed subject knowledge to plan activities that stimulate students' interest and provide sufficient challenge for them to learn. Learning is less effective when teachers plan the same activities for the whole class, so less able students find tasks too difficult and more able students are not sufficiently challenged. At times, teachers lose the attention of some students because they talk for too long, or during questioning accept the first hand up rather than engaging responses from all learners.

Assessment has improved significantly. Teachers now systematically monitor the standards that students attain, and these are well-documented so that a clear view of progress is obtained. Students are generally clear about the steps necessary to improve. However, the extent to which this information is used effectively to plan learning in classes is uneven across the academy. Where it is used well, all students learn effectively because learning activities are structured to individual's needs.

In the very best lessons, teachers enthuse about their subject and make learning fun: they set the highest expectations for students. For example, in mathematics, specific skills were taught step-by step in order to secure learning before moving to the next stage, and, in dance, the teacher demonstrated movements for students to replicate to a high standard before incorporating them into their dance routines.

The curriculum is increasingly tailored to the needs and interests of all learners. In Year 7, an effective range of strategies is used to address shortfalls in some students' basic skills, particularly literacy. By the end of the key stage, the more able students begin to pursue GCSE and vocational awards. Close monitoring of individual students' progress enables senior managers to steer them towards suitable courses and to maintain continuity of learning throughout Key Stage 4. A wide range of lunchtime, after-school clubs and academy events enrich the curriculum well and add significantly to students' enjoyment of school. The breadth of the curriculum in the sixth form is enhanced by vocational courses in a number of areas, with plans to extend the number of A levels available next year.

The specialisms in performing arts and in sport make a significant contribution to raising students' overall achievement and add a further dimension to the range of enrichment opportunities provided. Both specialisms are used well to foster good relations with the local community and to raise the profile of the academy in the

area. The specialism in mathematics is more recent and, therefore, the full impact has yet to be felt.

The good care, guidance and support provided is reflected in the regular attendance and improved attainment of the majority of its students. Relations between staff and students are strong: students feel that if they have concerns about their welfare or academic studies there is always someone willing to help them. The care and support provided for the most vulnerable students is very effective. The academy's commitment to inclusion is reflected in its very low rates of exclusion.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The impact of clear, coherent leadership by the Principal and his team of senior leaders is reflected in the significant improvements made to the standards achieved by students over the past two years. The foundations for this improvement have been laid by establishing common values amongst students and raising the expectations of what they are capable of achieving. The growing ethos of improvement and achievement throughout the academy is confirmed in lesson observations and in discussions with students, teachers and members of the governing body. The academy's improvement plan is challenging but realistic. Targets and timescales are precise and are effectively monitored.

There are clear lines of accountability between senior and middle leaders. The majority of subject leaders are delivering significant improvements within their areas. House leaders provide good pastoral care for students and are increasingly engaged in the academic monitoring of their progress. Self-evaluation recognises where most of the academy's strengths and weaknesses lie. Professional development is targeted where needed and has helped to improve teaching. The sharing of best practice is becoming widespread and much whole-school development has been undertaken. The lesson observation system, though accurate, does not always provide an evaluation of the learning and progress made by students in class. The collation of accurate performance data to track progress is used effectively to help drive up standards. Capacity to make further sustained improvements is good.

The governing body provides very good support for the academy and closely monitors the impact of senior leaders against detailed improvement plans. The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and fully meet requirements.

External support

Good support has been provided by the Specialist Schools Academies Trust during transition from predecessor school to academy status. The ongoing support provided

by the sponsor, the Ormiston Academies Trust, including consultancy from a School Improvement Partner, is valued highly by senior leaders.

Main Judgements

The academy has made **good** progress towards raising standards.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve opportunities for students to acquire learning skills that allow them to develop independently of the teacher.
- Address issues of differences in the attainment of male and female students
- Ensure that lesson planning fully utilises assessment information so that all students learn effectively and achieve their very best.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Group at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Ian Clelland, Chair of the Governing Body
The Academies Group, DfE [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk]

Once the school has had 24 hours to report any factual inaccuracies, the post-inspection letter is copied as appropriate to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- DfE - Academies Group colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk

The letters should also be copied electronically to:

paul.brooker@ofsted.gov.uk - the HMI with national responsibility for academies
each member of the inspection team,
the PO for SCC
ACADInspectionReports@ypla.gov.uk

A copy with editing marked up should be forwarded to the:

- lead HMI
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