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Mr Mark Stanyer
Principal
Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews Academy
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Dear Mr Stanyer

Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews Academy

Introduction

Following my visit with Kathleen Harris, additional inspector, to your academy on 25 to 26 April 2012, 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 and met with the Principal, senior school leaders, groups of students, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body. They also observed 16 lessons.

Context

The academy was created in September 2010, and the Principal took up his post at this time. Two additional vice-principals were appointed later during the academic year. The vast majority of staff transferred from the predecessor school, and further strengthening of both management and teaching staff has taken place since then.

The academy is fully staffed. The number of students applying to join Year 7 in September 2012 is significantly higher than the number currently in Year 7. A completely new build for the academy is well advanced and is on target to meet its opening date in January 2013. Stoke City Football Club has chosen the academy as its partner for its Football Academy, and currently six students, including some from overseas, are educated at the academy as part of this programme. The academy has specialist status for mathematics and business and enterprise.

The academy is smaller than the average size secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high and so is the proportion of students supported by school action plus or by a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is low. The proportion for whom English is not their first language is also low compared with other schools.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

In the past the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades in the range A*-C has been above average, but low results in English meant that the proportion gaining five grades including English and mathematics was low. Current results in English are substantially ahead of last year, and this improvement is evident across all year groups. Mathematics results are also ahead of last year, with improvement across all year groups. In both English and mathematics, students are making much better progress, and this is true particularly for the most able students, whose progress in previous years had been disappointing. Disabled students, and those with special educational needs, are also making better progress. A number of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 have low reading ability. Through a new intensive programme they are now rapidly improving their reading skills.

Students work hard in their lessons, and engage well in active learning or group work when such opportunities are provided. Sometimes, however, they are only expected to be passive learners, or just respond to closed questions. As a result, their skills and confidence in speaking are lower than would be expected, and opportunities are missed to develop their creativity and imagination. Students respond well to the powerful reflection times in both formal assemblies and tutor periods, when important issues are presented and their implications discussed.

The quality of teaching

The teaching has improved substantially since the academy opened, although there is still some variation in quality. There is now a significant core of good teaching and some outstanding teaching. In the best lessons, teachers engage their classes with imaginative activities. In a Year 10 history class, the teacher provided a collection of interesting resources, some print based and some in electronic format. Students worked in groups to explore these resources and form a judgement as to the quality of leadership provided by Field Marshall Haig in the First World War. During the lesson students made outstanding progress, and some of the contemporary film

shown made a significant impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

All teachers use learning objectives in their lessons well, and return to these to assess the understanding that students are making. Most teachers develop the vocabulary of their students well by displaying and modelling key words. The development of wider literacy skills is more variable. Some teachers use writing frames well, but in some classes their use is too widespread and limits the writing of the more able. The development of students' speaking skills is limited. Some teachers are skilled at setting up effective group work, but in some classes students are expected to be mainly passive learners. Some teachers plan for group work in their lessons, but this work is not set up effectively in practice. Most marking of students' work is regular, detailed and helpful. Teachers are now expecting more of the most able students, and in many subjects these students are now making much better progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students behave well in class and around the academy. Students, staff and governors all describe the substantial improvement in behaviour that has taken place since the academy was formed. This improvement is clear in the academy's behaviour records. Attendance has improved and the incidence of fixed-term exclusions is much reduced, although in both cases outcomes are still not as good as those found nationally. The incidence of persistent absence is, however, now reduced to the extent that it is better than the national average.

Students are clear that they feel safe in school. If instances of bullying should occur, students are confident that matters will be swiftly addressed. They are proud of way the academy has developed. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, and teachers manage behaviour skilfully.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The Principal provides leadership of very high quality and has been instrumental in the successful development of the academy. With the senior team he was quick to identify the main priorities and has secured significant improvement in standards, teaching and behaviour. Academy self-evaluation is concise and accurate. Senior leaders have a very good understanding of the strengths of teaching and where it needs to develop. Well-devised programmes have led to the quality of teaching improving rapidly. The governing body maintains a good general oversight of the academy and has been particularly effective in monitoring progress in academic standards and in ensuring high quality safeguarding procedures. A range of outreach programmes with local primary schools has been effective. The academy has demonstrated good capacity for further improvement.

Subject leaders mostly have less experience to draw on. They monitor their departments well, but their role as active leaders of learning in their departments is

not yet so well developed. The development of this role will be essential for further gains to be made in the quality of teaching.

External support

The academy has received good support from its sponsor, including advice on developing literacy and numeracy, and from Keele University. The local authority continues to provide good support with the building programme.

Main Judgements

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

Priorities for further improvement

- Share current good and outstanding practice in the academy to ensure that all teachers:
 - involve students more actively in their learning
 - develop students' oracy skills effectively
 - develop students' creativity and imagination.
- Increase the consistency of high quality teaching by developing subject leaders as leaders and coaches of learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Barbour
Her Majesty's Inspector