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Mr Grahame Hodson
Headteacher
Beverley Grammar School
Queensgate
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Dear Mr Hodson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Beverley Grammar School, East Riding of Yorkshire

Following my visit to your academy on 17 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with: you, your deputy; two assistant headteachers; the head of the sixth form; the heads of English and mathematics; and two members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy's post Ofsted action plan was evaluated and I examined academy documents, including monitoring records of teaching and your latest progress data.

Context

Since the recent section 5 inspection, one member of staff has resigned.

Main findings

Even before the Section 5 inspection in April, its leaders recognised that the academy required improvement. With this in mind, they set about fundamentally reviewing and restructuring the leadership and management of teaching and learning and the ways in which students' progress and attainment were measured and evaluated, and the rigour with which leaders, including middle leaders, routinely monitored and intervened to improve the performance of staff and students. Therefore, when the requires improvement judgement was formally delivered, it was disappointing rather than a surprise, because the academy felt that it had already begun to tackle a number of the issues highlighted. The academy

has continued to develop and introduce a range of improvement procedures and strategies. Staff have benefitted from training and mentoring to improve their competence and confidence in implementing the new measures and have been given the chance to observe the good practice of their peers. There has been a big focus on ensuring lessons: are well-matched to the varying needs of students; provide suitable levels of challenge; and enable students to make strong demonstrable progress. To this end, a number of non-negotiable aspects to lessons has been introduced and staff are being monitored far more regularly and rigorously to check the quality and consistency of their teaching. In addition, careful attention is being paid to the accuracy of monitoring, assessment, marking and feedback, with more regular discussion about students' learning and progress beginning to take place, with a view to intervening more quickly to effect improvements or nip in the bud any slower progress or regression apparent. These systems are not yet fully embedded across the academy. For example, senior staff have trialled, but are yet to launch a whole-school system for tracking and evaluating students' academic performance.

Notwithstanding the excellent progress and attainments of individual sixth formers, students' achievement generally requires improvement. As a result, the sixth form is now subject to the same added rigor and accountability being introduced in the main school. Changes are being made to the tutor system to improve the guidance, challenge and support students receive, alongside staff training to improve the impact of teaching, and help to ensure students make good rather than mediocre progress during their time in the sixth form.

The academy's leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and know that securing consistently high-quality practice among all staff is the biggest challenge they face. The changes introduced to date have yet to fully reveal their impact. Monitoring shows that despite some green shoots, teaching still requires improvement. Also, predictions indicate that, Year 11 and Year 13 students' achievement in 2013, will be similar to those in 2012.

Members of the governing body have a wealth of relevant experiences and expertise that they are bringing to bear in holding the academy's leaders to account for its performance. They are realistic about the academy's current predicament and accept that they must be more influential in strategically driving improvements. They have the skills to discuss and interpret achievement data accurately, ask incisive questions about the impact of teaching on learning, and are monitoring the academy's progress in tackling its key issues forcefully.

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:

- link formally with a good or better school to accelerate further the school's improvement
- make sure that all achievement targets are sufficiently challenging and represent good or better progress for all students, particularly those in Year 11 and Year 13 when set against their starting points on entry to the Year 7 and Year 12 respectively
- establish a rigorous and reliable data management system that enables staff at all levels of the academy to accurately and regularly, record, report, review, and intervene to support, all students' progress and attainment.

It is likely that Ofsted will conduct a further visit in the Autumn term 2013 and, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The academy has commissioned the services of educational consultants and a school improvement partner to help them increase their effectiveness. This has included: training to raise standards and improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning; work with middle leaders and governors to increase their understanding of, and efficiency in, carrying out their roles and responsibilities; and advice and guidance for senior leaders to improve the robustness of their leadership of monitoring and evaluation procedures, such as marking and feedback, target-setting and lesson observation training. The academy has also sought middle leader training from the National College for School leadership. While there is no formal partnership, the academy has received some assistance from the Red Kite Teaching Alliance and met with the headteachers of schools in a similar situation to itself.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector