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7 February 2014

Mr John Tomasevic
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Tomasevic

Special measures monitoring inspection of Nottingham University Samworth Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 6 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you (briefly), the acting head of school, other members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, pastoral leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from one of the sponsors, the University of Nottingham. In addition, I met with a group of students across different age groups and carried out a tour of the academy with the acting head of school. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated. Other academy self-evaluation documents were also scrutinised.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been a number of staffing changes. New appointments include new heads of mathematics and science, a senior leader in charge of teaching and learning with special responsibility for newly qualified teachers, an external consultant on a one-year contract to oversee progress in Year 11, and two part-time teachers to teach in the mathematics and social sciences departments. A deputy headteacher from Toot Hill School has been recruited for two days a week to support pastoral development. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in January. Two senior leaders left the academy in December.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The new leaders in post since October 2013 have brought much needed order and efficiency to the academy. They have quickly established a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. However, the academy improvement plan is not as sharp as it should be. For example, it does not identify clearly who will evaluate the actions to be taken or when, and not all the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 report are clearly addressed. This means that governors and sponsors will not be able to hold leaders effectively to account.

One of the first tasks carried out by you and the acting head of school was to clarify roles and responsibilities for all leaders and managers; they are now clear about what they are expected to do and how they will be held to account. The actions taken so far to address some of the key areas for improvement in the section 5 report have already resulted in positive signs in the classroom. For example, training to improve the clarity of assessment data has led to teachers planning their lessons more closely around the needs of different ability groups. The quality and frequency of marking are improving. Targets are set and known by students, although they are not always clear about how they can improve their level or grade.

Important changes such as a new timetable, improved choices in Year 10 and an increase in the number of lessons in the academy day have already led to better engagement by students. There are now fewer fixed-term exclusions compared to the previous year, and students report that disruption to lessons is now rare. The academy has a calm, purposeful atmosphere; students are polite and cooperative. As a result of leaders learning from best practice in another school, behaviour management systems are being rigorously reviewed, to further secure high standards.

The leaders responsible for English, mathematics and science speak confidently about weaknesses in their respective subjects and the effective actions taken so far

to address them. They value the increased focus on improving teachers' skills. A comprehensive training programme is now established.

The new Chair of the Governing Body is experienced and knowledgeable. He brings important challenge and expertise to the role. An essential review of governance is planned for March 2014. Sponsors take a strong and active role in the strategic management of the academy. Representatives visit the academy regularly and now provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders. Their statement of action, however, is not compliant and therefore not fit for purpose because the sponsors have not addressed clearly enough all the areas for improvement set out in the section 5 report. In addition, support for the plan has not been properly resourced or costed. The academy has recruited the services of a school improvement consultant, who has carried out quality assurance activities. An outstanding school within The Torch Academy Gateway Trust has supported the academy well in training teachers.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The sponsor's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers because of the appointment of an experienced senior leader to oversee their training and induction.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State and the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Nottingham, the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

ZConnolly

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector