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26 March 2014

Ms Sue Hare
Principal
Gillbrook Academy
Normanby Road
Middlesbrough
Cleveland
TS6 9AG

Dear Ms Hare

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Gillbrook Academy

Following my visit to your school on 25 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, and the regional director of education for the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). I scrutinised a range of documentation including lesson observation records, reviews of staff performance and information about students' current achievements and progress. The AET sponsor statement of action and the academy's rapid improvement plan were evaluated. In addition, I undertook a tour of the academy with the Principal.

Context

Gillbrook Academy is closing at the end of the current academic year. It is amalgamating with Eston Academy and will reopen on the Gillbrook site in September 2014 as the AET sponsor-led Hillsview Academy. The Principal designate for Hillsview has been in post since January 2014.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Academy leaders are taking swift and decisive action and are driving improvement through with dedication and determination in challenging and turbulent circumstances. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Staff are responding positively to the higher expectations and clearer sense of purpose that has been set for them. As a result, leaders can securely demonstrate improvements against most of the areas for further improvement identified in the last inspection in December 2013.

The number of students educated off-site has been reduced substantially. Great strides have been taken to implement effective strategies to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment data are being used more effectively to track the progress of individual students and year groups and to tackle variations in performance by subject. This closer scrutiny and analysis is resulting in more timely individual support and targeted interventions to accelerate progress, particularly in Year 11. A full week of revision support is in place for Year 11 students in the Easter break.

Senior leaders' monitoring of all aspects of teachers' work is thorough and appropriately focused. Moderation processes are secure. Professional development activities are equipping middle leaders with the skills needed to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Regular lesson observations and learning walks confirm that the quality of teaching and marking is improving. Consequently, students are engaging more in their learning and are increasingly being provided with opportunities to act on the advice they receive to improve their work. Senior leaders recognise that more time is needed to ensure that these improvements translate into consistently embedded practice that will halt previous underperformance and have a sustained impact on raising students' achievements.

Governors have reorganised their committees to align with the areas for further improvement identified at the inspection in December 2013 and the key priorities in the academy's rapid improvement plan. Information and support provided through the AET advisor has strengthened the governors' ability to challenge senior leaders on the rate of progress and impact of actions. Members of the governing body are committed to making a difference to the school and demonstrate a clear intent to do so through the extensive range of activities they have engaged in and undertaken recently. Members of the governing body are currently meeting regularly with their counterparts at Eston Park to ensure that a full governing body with the right skills is in place when the two academies amalgamate.

The academy sponsor, AET is playing an important part in the drive for improvement. External consultants and sponsor staff have been used to good effect to sharpen and improve the quality of leadership and teaching, to conduct rigorous progress checks and support governors. The early appointment of the Principal designate to lead the amalgamation has increased leadership capacity. This well-

considered approach has ensured that the senior leaders and school staff have been able to focus their attention solely on securing improvement in the quality of education current students receive.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Adult and Children's Services for Redcar and Cleveland and the Chief Executive of the Academies Enterprise Trust. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley

Her Majesty's Inspector