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13 May 2014

Mrs V White
Headteacher
Bridgemary School
Wych Lane
Gosport
PO13 0JN

Dear Mrs White

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Bridgemary School

Following my visit to your academy on 13 May 2014 with Christine Jones, Additional inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in April 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is not making enough progress towards the removal of the serious weakness designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Education Funding Agency, the local authority for Hampshire and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Marcia Headon
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2013

- Improve teaching, so that all groups of students make good or better progress in all subjects by:
 - setting work that engages and challenges students of all abilities
 - ensuring that students are given written feedback that raises aspirations and demands high-quality responses to improve standards
 - ensuring that all work is completed to a sufficiently high standard and that students are given time in lessons to make improvements
 - setting homework that is of a high quality and ensuring that this is completed to a good standard.

- Raise achievement in science so that standards are at least in line with national averages for GCSE examinations and all students make good, or better, progress in lessons.

- Improve levels of attendance and punctuality within all year groups by continuing to focus on the needs of students who are persistently absent and are regularly late to school.

- Ensure that school leaders, including governors, promote further improvements in teaching through the rigorous application of policies and procedures.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 13 May 2014

Evidence

The inspectors met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, the learning director for science, the attendance officer and the business director responsible for attendance and punctuality and two members of the governing body. The inspectors observed 16 lessons, jointly observed with members of the senior team or middle managers. In lessons, inspectors talked to students and viewed their work. Inspectors scrutinised documentation to show evidence of the work taken to improve standards. These included the latest academy development plans, external reports, attendance figures and information about the progress students are making. The single central record was checked.

Context

There have been a considerable number of staffing changes since the previous monitoring inspection. A substantive headteacher has been appointed replacing the interim headteacher. She had been in post for two weeks at the time of this inspection. A new executive headteacher, who began his role in January 2014, has overall accountability for the academy. Ten members of staff have left. A new assistant headteacher took up her post in January 2014, as did two teachers of science, three teachers of mathematics, a teacher of religious education and a teacher of geography. A number of the existing staff took on additional responsibilities. One teacher has been promoted temporarily to act as an acting deputy headteacher. Other internal appointments include a head of English, a head of humanities, the second in the humanities department, a coordinator for mathematics at Key Stage 4 and a leader for Year 7.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

The headteacher and executive headteacher, although new in post, have a clear sense of the work which still needs to be done. They are fully aware that the focus of the academy must remain on improving the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring that students of all abilities are enabled to make the best progress possible. Since the previous monitoring visit new systems have been introduced, including a revised structure for lesson planning and expectations for marking. While progress has been made on introducing these initiatives, they are not being used consistently by all staff and their impact is therefore not yet fully evident.

The academy's current data indicate that students in Year 11 are likely to attain better results in the GCSE examinations than in 2013, although the proportion of students predicted to achieve five higher grade passes including English and mathematics is still likely to be below national averages. Data show that the proportion of students who are on track to make reasonable progress will be much nearer the national average than last year but the proportion of students likely to

make better than expected progress will remain below the national average. The current tracking data also demonstrate that the gap in achievement of students in Year 11 who are in receipt of pupil premium (funding allocated to provide extra support for students who are in receipt of free school meals, are in care or come from service families) and other students in Year 11 is narrowing but will still remain wide.

There have been ongoing changes in the leadership team and these are continuing. Some members of the senior team are monitoring the quality of teaching and learning effectively. They are focusing on support for the middle leaders in the academy, training them in how to monitor their curriculum areas and to become more responsible for the quality of education in their subjects. However, because of staffing issues and the need for the senior team to fill gaps in teaching, the time available for their senior leadership roles has been constrained. The judgements of these staff on the quality of teaching and learning seen in the lessons observed on the monitoring visit and on the quality of work completed over time agreed with those of the inspectors. However, the academy recognises that at senior level there is a lack of capacity to enable the academy to implement fully its strategic vision.

Middle leaders are held to account for the work of their departments. Some are still relatively new to the role and although they have developed their understanding of what needs to be done they still need more time to strengthen their leadership skills.

The local governing body is working to develop a vision of where it wishes the academy to be. It is aware that the quality of teaching is still an issue. An external review of governance has been completed and this has identified further training needs. It has begun to ask for and to receive data which are more easily understandable but currently it is not asking challenging enough questions and governors have not paid enough visits to the academy. The governing body does not have a sufficient knowledge of the spending of the pupil premium money or its impact and no named governor has specific oversight of this important initiative.

Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- Staff fully understand the priorities of the academy and are committed to raising the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievement.
- The academy's focus on reinforcing the importance of regular attendance, coupled with careful tracking of students' absence and rapid and effective intervention when it begins to rise, has resulted in a considerable improvement in the figures. Attendance is now near the national average. The academy has provided advice, support and help to improve students' punctuality and this has also been successful in ensuring they arrive promptly. The attendance officer has made home visits and liaison with parents and carers over this issue has proved effective.
- Checking of the marking of Year 11 mock examinations and controlled assessments by markers external to the school have validated and given

additional security and confidence to the academy's own analysis of the current Year 11 achievement. This has given the academy increased confidence in the accuracy of its predictions.

- The time spent on staff training on classroom practice has resulted in the majority of staff having an improved understanding of what good teaching looks like and its impact upon learning.
- The introduction of a standardized structure for the planning of lessons has meant this is now more consistent and is helping staff to improve the quality of their teaching. However, the quality of teaching in lessons and over time is still not good enough.
- The emphasis which has been placed on ensuring policies and procedures are being applied rigorously has resulted in improved behaviour around the academy. However, there is still a lack of consistency in implementing these policies among the staff.
- The changes to the science GCSE courses have broadened the science curriculum and are helping to raise standards.

Weaknesses in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- Although the academy has invested heavily in training, the quality of teaching is still too variable across subjects and year groups. It lacks sufficient pace, which means students do not make enough progress in the lessons or over time and sometimes do not cover sufficient work. Too much teaching requires improvement and no outstanding teaching was seen.
- The academy has not placed sufficient emphasis upon the teaching of literacy in all subjects. Students enter the academy with relatively low levels of literacy and the lack of reinforcement of this important aspect in all subjects hinders progress.
- Too often the way in which the curriculum content is taught is pedestrian, lacks vibrancy and does not engage the students or encourage them to sustain concentration. Teachers do not always make learning fully relevant to students, and sometimes spend too long on a topic when it is clear students have mastered the skill being taught. In a mathematics lesson observed, students were keenly involved in the initial idea of working on the area of a trapezium but the task went on for too long once they had mastered the concept. Consequently, their interest waned and progress slowed.
- Teachers mark books conscientiously, and the majority of students know the standards at which they are working. However, the comments from teachers are not always sufficiently detailed or specific enough to help students with the next piece of work. Nor do students always act on this advice. Teachers do not always allow enough time for students to make corrections.
- Work is not always well matched to the ability of the students. Less-able students are not always provided with resources to help them with their learning and the more able are not always given challenging enough tasks. In a mathematics lesson, although different levels of work were offered to students, the teacher did not monitor the choices with enough rigour to ensure the students were challenged sufficiently or chose appropriate tasks.

- The academy has data for each year group but there is some confusion over terminology which means not all staff have a clear understanding of what is meant by it. The academy is aware of this and is working to clarify and simplify the data.
- The academy has a good understanding of the needs of Year 11 students and has provided targeted support to help them achieve at GCSE. However, less intervention has been provided in the lower years of the academy.
- The academy has not placed enough emphasis upon monitoring and analyzing the impact of the pupil premium money. Data show the gap is closing between those students in receipt of pupil premium and those who are not. However, the academy is not certain which interventions have been most effective and this does not help with future planning.
- Teachers do not always set high enough expectations for the presentation of students' work. Pages in writing books are sometimes missed out and work is often untidy. This will hinder progress when books are used for revision.

External support

The sponsor has continued to provide support for the academy and was instrumental in the recruitment of the new headteacher. It has provided consultants to support the leadership team and provided good support for the new headteacher on her induction. It has also organized external consultants for the academy to validate the data and provided training for staff.