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Mr M Cammack
Headteacher
Braunton Academy
Barton Lane
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Dear Mr Cammack

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Braunton Academy

Following my visit to your school on 16 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are undertaking 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 March 2014, which was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- ensure that improvement plans have clear measurable milestones to check on the progress towards targets
- fully implement the new student information system to ensure that targets set for students are challenging and that leaders can refine their analysis of students' achievement to provide timely support where necessary.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, leaders with responsibility for subjects (subject leaders) and members of the governing body to

discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy improvement plan was evaluated and there were short visits to lessons.

Context

Since the previous inspection a new principal has been appointed, he took up post on 1 September 2014. There have been no other changes at leadership level.

Main findings

You have made a good start in bringing about the necessary improvements identified at the previous inspection. There is a clear understanding from leaders, staff and students that expectations have been raised. Subject leaders recognise that they play a crucial role in ensuring the quality of teaching and marking is of a consistently high quality. While many initiatives you have implemented are in their early stages, all staff that were spoken to during this monitoring visit indicated that you have provided a renewed sense of purpose at the academy and set a clear direction to become good and better in a short time.

To ensure that the raised expectations are maintained, a monitoring cycle has been implemented so that regular checks are made by subject leaders on the quality of teaching and marking within their departments. Subject leaders are held closely to account by senior leaders for this monitoring and produce regular evidence to substantiate their findings. Each subject leader has a target set to judge their performance which is linked to monitoring their departments effectively.

Improving the quality of teaching remains, rightly, a key focus for you. A regular series of appropriate training opportunities are being implemented for staff to develop their practice in key aspects of teaching, for example developing literacy and questioning techniques. Regular opportunities are in place to allow departments to share their best practice with other staff to enable them to use the most effective teaching strategies within their own classrooms.

A feedback and marking policy has been introduced. The expectation within this policy is that teachers will identify the strengths within students' work and provide them with clear next steps as to how they can improve their learning further. Teachers are required to provide students with time to reflect and respond to their feedback to enable them to show that they understand how to improve their learning. You see this as fundamental in enabling students to achieve higher grades. As a result, each teacher has a target set which is linked to judging their performance to ensure their feedback and marking is of a high quality.

A new information system is being implemented which is designed to set challenging targets for students and for subject leaders to be able to conduct a rigorous analysis of information on students' achievement. This system is yet to be fully implemented

and as a result subject leaders are unable to fully analyse students' achievement information to ensure appropriate and timely support is provided.

The GCSE examination outcomes for 2014 show significant improvement. More students achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics than in 2013. The progress students made in English rose significantly with most students making good progress in this subject.

Students speak positively about the academy. They indicate that behaviour is good and that they feel safe. Students have positive attitudes towards their learning. Year 7 students say that they received helpful support prior to commencing at the academy and they have settled well.

Members of the governing body are knowledgeable about the academy's strengths and areas in need of further development. They communicate passion and determination to ensure that the students receive the very best education. Governors have aligned themselves to key improvement areas, for example the quality of teaching and students' progress to enable them to have a more developed understanding of improvements.

The academy development plan identifies the key areas that are in need of improvement and also defines the strategies that will be implemented to bring about improvement. There are, however, no regular, measurable targets to enable the governing body to closely monitor the progress towards achieving the targets that have been set.

External support

A range of external consultants are being used effectively to enable leaders to bring about improvements quickly. There are also well-developed links with other schools in the local area to receive, and provide, targeted support for individual teachers and subjects.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Devon and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe
Her Majesty's Inspector