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1 May 2015

Mr Neil Miley  
Principal  
Dixons Kings Academy  
Northside Road  
Lidget Green  
Bradford  
BD7 2AN

Dear Mr Miley

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dixons Kings Academy, Bradford**

Following my visit to your school with Fiona Manuel Her Majesty's Inspector on 30 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. 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 December 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, other senior and middle leaders, and the Chief Executive Officer of Dixons Academies Trust. A phone conversation was held with the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed line-up at the start of the day and daily reflection time. A learning walk, during which students' workbooks were looked at, was conducted to a number of Key Stage 3 lessons. The academy's improvement plan and self-evaluation were considered, as well as a range of supporting documentation.

## **Context**

In January 2015, the academy became part of the Dixons Academies Trust and a new Principal took up post. A number of vacant teaching posts are covered by supply teachers.

## **Main findings**

The academy's improvement plan is clearly set out with sequential actions linked to demanding and, in the main, quantifiable targets. It is a high-level strategic plan encompassing the issues raised at the inspection. Milestone dates show when actions are expected to be piloted, implemented and reviewed. Progress is evaluated regularly, including by the governing body. The plan is not used at middle leadership level, where a system of action planning linked to frequent evaluations of departmental performance is clearly understood.

A key driver in the improvement plan is the consistent implementation of whole-school systems, already tried and tested in other Dixons' academies. The Principal has made a rapid start on this. There has been a sharp focus on establishing a purposeful climate in which the best learning can take place. Well-ordered routines ensure that students start the day on time and ready to learn – with the right uniform, equipment and conduct. Punctuality has improved considerably as a result.

Routines in lessons have been introduced so that students know immediately both when and how teachers expect them to listen actively by tracking the speaker or work silently, independently, with a partner or in a group. Teachers have had training so that all use a common language to signal these expectations. New routines regarding equipment have helped to ensure that time in lessons is used fully. The same is true of 'Do now' tasks with which every lesson starts, helping students to practise literacy skills through a short activity linked to the subject. During the learning walk, use of these routines was observed, albeit with varying levels of success. Although not thoroughly embedded, low-level disruption to learning has decreased, as has the number of detentions and exclusions.

Coaching of all teachers has been introduced as a key strategy for improving the quality of teaching. Short observations are made weekly, accompanied by feedback which is then followed up. Staff spoken to welcomed the regular opportunities to reflect on their practice through open, professional dialogue. A whole-school approach to marking and feedback has been introduced. Teachers note what went well and where improvements can be made, sometimes giving students the opportunity to respond. However, this is evidently not embedded fully since students spoken to seemed uncertain about the purpose of responses.

At present there is a mismatch between the academy's view of the quality of teaching and the measures of students' progress. Drawing on expertise in the academies group, further work is underway to secure the accuracy of assessments.

This is both to ensure that measures of progress are correct and that teachers have a clear understanding of the levels at which students are working. Help has also been provided to ensure that students with special educational needs are correctly identified. As a consequence, some additional support is now in place for a number of Year 10 students and further work is planned to improve the quality of provision for all those with additional needs.

Plans for significant improvements to the curriculum from September are well underway. Creative subjects are being introduced and staff have been recruited to deliver these. The introduction of a whole-school approach to promoting students' literacy skills, including their oracy, is in hand. The school day is being revised and students will be offered extra-curricular opportunities for new activities and sports to enrich their learning and personal development.

The academy is adopting the electronic analysis systems used by the Dixons group of schools. This is improving the quality of management information available to leaders. For example, it has highlighted the above-average level of persistent absence. Leaders are working hard to identify the reasons for this. The Dixons group has recently employed an education social worker who will work with Kings for two days per week to raise attendance.

The governing body has transferred unaltered to the academy in its new form, providing stability through governors' in-depth knowledge and understanding of the situation. Governors bring very considerable experience and expertise to their roles and meeting minutes show that they provide a robust level of challenge regarding decisions. Two governors are also part of the Dixons Group's governing council so are well placed to shine a spotlight on the academy's needs.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

Dixons Academies Trust is providing considerable support to the academy. This includes help to implement successful systems used across the Dixons schools, including those for analysing students' achievement. The Chief Executive Officer is confident that the range of expertise required can be found within the Dixons family of academies, as is the case with leadership of provision for students with special educational needs. The sponsor has acted promptly to strengthen leadership at the senior level, recruiting a senior Vice-Principal from September. Meanwhile, a highly experience consultant senior leader has been engaged to add capacity in the interim.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, Dixons Academies Trust and the Director of Children's Services for Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin

**Her Majesty's Inspector**