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1 June 2015

Philip Loveday
Headteacher
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Bridgnorth
WV16 4ER

Dear Mr Loveday

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bridgnorth Endowed School

Following my visit with Karen Lockett, Additional Inspector, and Michael Hiscox, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 2–3 June 2015, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint NQTs without first discussing this with me.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of appropriate authority for Bridgnorth Endowed School
cc. Karen Bradshaw Director of Children's Services for Shropshire
cc. For Academies only Department for Education
CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2014

- Improve teaching, especially in English, mathematics and science, so that all students experience teaching which accelerates their progress by:
 - making sure that work is marked correctly and teacher assessments are accurate
 - improving the quality of feedback given to students so that corrections can be done quickly and more time is spent in filling gaps in learning or challenging students to think harder about their work
 - planning work that builds on what students already know, using accurate assessment information to guide this
 - making sure that all students, in particular the most-able, are given work that is hard enough to make them have to think about what they are doing and keep them interested
 - making sure that the least-able can make progress without being overly reliant on help from the teacher or others.

- Make sure that more students, including those that are disadvantaged, make at least the progress they should in English and mathematics, and in the sixth form, through:
 - more frequent and accurate checks on their learning
 - providing precisely targeted work to fill gaps in their learning where these are identified.

- Carry out an urgent review of the curriculum for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 to ensure that:
 - no more students are entered for GCSE examinations before they are ready to achieve the top grades
 - where students have already achieved grades below the top grades, they are provided with opportunities to continue with these subjects and to deepen their knowledge to prepare them better for study post-16.

- Improve leadership at all levels, including governance, so that this becomes more strategic by:
 - making sure all leaders have the necessary skills and understanding to be able to use assessment information to quickly identify where things are going wrong
 - improve the accuracy of leaders' evaluations of the work of the school including using information about students' achievement in judging the quality of teaching
 - regularly reviewing information on behaviour and attendance, in particular that of disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and checking the ways to improve behaviour and attendance are actually making a difference.

An external review of governance, and of the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 2–3 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and the work of students, met with you, senior and subject leaders, a group of teachers, groups of students, and the Chair and other members of the Governing Body. Inspectors also scrutinised external reviews of the academy's work carried out since the last inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection, you have reorganised the senior leadership team to ensure that roles and responsibilities are well matched to the academy's priorities for improvement. Following a review of governance, the governing body has also been restructured.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Monitoring systems and processes have been much improved since the last inspection. This, combined with a much more rigorous approach to checking the accuracy of assessments, is having a positive impact on leaders' ability to collect and analyse information. Information about students' progress is now robust and, increasingly, it is being used effectively to rapidly identify where groups or individuals are not making the progress they should. Attendance is also tracked carefully, along with information about behaviour incidents, to usefully identify patterns that may have an adverse impact on achievement. This information is being used creatively to inform the monitoring activities that you and your leaders take on a regular basis to check on students' learning. Consequently, there is much earlier identification of underperformance.

Since the last inspection, you have sharpened your focus on the progress made by disadvantaged students. All teachers are now required to identify the additional support required for these students and to monitor the impact this has on their progress. As a result, the academy's own records suggest that gaps between these students and others are narrowing. This is particularly the case in mathematics for Year 11. Consequently, you are confident that the predicted rise in achievement for all students this year will be underpinned by significantly better achievement of disadvantaged students.

Although gaps are also closing at Key Stage 3, this is more evident, in these year groups, in English. You are aware of the need for leaders to systematically analyse the impact of additional support activities across year groups and subjects so that you are better able to identify precisely what is working well and what needs to be reviewed. We also agreed that it would be useful to measure progress from one

assessment point to the next, as well as from the beginning of the academic year, to allow leaders to more quickly identify where progress may have slowed.

The progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs is also improving. This is because systems have been put in place to ensure that all teachers are aware of their particular learning needs and have clear advice about how to best meet these. The 'three step plans' encourage partnership working between teachers and teaching assistants, so that there is a clear, strategic approach to the support provided for these students in classrooms, as well as the additional support provided at other times. The academy's records suggest that many of these students are now making better than expected progress from their starting points. This is reflected in this year's predictions for five GCSE grades at C or above, including English and mathematics, which, if achieved, will be well above expectations for these students.

The quality of teaching

Very little inadequate teaching over time was noted during this inspection. However, you agreed that, where this is the case, it is within a particular subject. Although steps have been taken to address this, and appointments made for September are expected to improve the situation, we agreed that very close monitoring will be required to ensure that students receive the quality teaching they are entitled to.

The academy's own records and the evidence seen by inspectors suggest that teaching is improving overall in all key stages, including the sixth form. The vast majority of teachers plan their lessons well, paying close attention to setting up appropriate sequences of activities to secure the learning objective. However, a number of teachers lack the confidence to adapt their planning in the light of outcomes in the lesson. Consequently, in some cases, the pace of learning is slower than it needs to be.

In most lessons, inspectors noted that teachers have high expectations of behaviour and students respond to these positively. Those students who find it difficult to meet expectations nonetheless try hard because they have respect for their teachers. For instance, in a Key Stage 3 English lesson, many of the students had specific difficulties with behaviour, but because they were well supported and their needs were met, they were able to participate in the learning effectively, making good progress as a result.

In mathematics, teachers are developing a useful approach to providing different levels of challenge according to the ability of students. However, this is not the case in most other subjects. As a result, too many less-able students remain overly reliant on adult support to complete tasks set and more-able students are not being stretched enough. You agree that this is the case and we discussed the need for teachers to be supported in making much better use of the assessment information

now available when planning their lessons. We also agreed that professional development activities could be usefully focused on ensuring that all teachers have a thorough understanding of the range of strategies that can be deployed to achieve this.

The recent focus on improving literacy across the academy is having a positive impact. In all subjects, inspectors saw well-placed literacy resources that were referred to frequently at appropriate points in the lesson. Teachers reminded students of the need to use the appropriate subject-specific language and provided clear advice about how to approach writing tasks. We agreed that the next step would be to develop a similar approach to the development of numeracy.

In nearly all cases, students' books are now marked regularly. However, the quality of advice provided remains variable. In some cases, most notably in English, written feedback makes it clear what students have done well and what they need to improve. All teachers used 'fix it', as required by the academy's policy, but in many cases, especially where marking was weaker, this is used to replace the next steps for learning. As a result, students do not always know what they need to do to improve over time, beyond correcting spelling and grammar.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students routinely show respect for staff and for each other. They move around the academy calmly, and no incidents of unacceptable behaviour were seen. Low-level disruption is rare and limited to those lessons where teaching is weakest. Students confirm that this is the case and say that, in these lessons, teachers do not apply the behaviour policy consistently. You are aware of this and are monitoring behaviour incidents closely to ensure that appropriate steps are taken.

Students say that they feel safe in the academy and they talk confidently of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet. They say that bullying is very rare, and that it is dealt with rapidly if it occurs. They were very clear that the academy does not tolerate homophobic or racist bullying, and this is reflected in the records kept by the academy. Records show that incidents of poor behaviour are declining. This year, there have been no permanent exclusions and there has been a significant reduction in fixed-term exclusions.

You and your leaders have worked rapidly to address the shortcomings in promoting British values identified at the last inspection. A programme of assemblies and planned opportunities to extend students' knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects is now in place. Recently, students had the opportunity to take part in a series of mock elections and you have continued your strong links with schools in China and Tanzania.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders now have a clear understanding of the academy's performance. The new data systems have ensured precise and regular information is available and, importantly, this is now being acted upon rapidly.

Staff morale is high because you have established a team ethos of working together to achieve the required improvements. Staff clearly appreciate this. They say that there is a consistent drive to improve but that this is backed up by training and support where required.

Changes have been made to the curriculum for 2015/16 so that it will better meet the needs of students. In particular, Year 9 students will no longer take GCSE exams in foundation subjects. However, leaders need to be aware that Key Stage 4 students may still choose to take one-year GCSE courses in Year 10 in subjects that they wish to study at sixth form, leaving them with a substantial time lag that could be detrimental to later success. Although there are plans to ensure that those staying in the academy's sixth form are supported, there needs to be consideration of those students who may wish to study elsewhere post-16.

Frequent and rigorous monitoring has ensured that attendance is continuing to improve. The attendance of particular groups is tracked carefully and absence is followed up quickly, with firm action taken where required.

You have placed a strong focus on improving middle leadership, particularly in English and mathematics. This is paying dividends, as these middle leaders are now playing a much more active role in monitoring the quality of teaching and achievement in their subjects. In turn, this is having a clear impact on improving students' rates of progress because subject leaders are checking that additional support is rapidly provided and its impact is reviewed regularly. We agreed that it is now imperative that the improved practice in these core subjects is shared across all middle leaders to ensure that the small senior leadership team is able to distribute responsibility appropriately.

Governors have responded quickly to the review of governance. They have restructured the governing body so that committees are closely aligned to the academy's priorities. They know the progress made so far and the next steps required to continue to improve. Based on more frequent and accurate data from senior leaders, they have raised the level of challenge, while recognising where they need to support.

External support

External support from a neighbouring local authority and from local high-performing schools has been effective. Work with leaders has informed actions and helped to build capacity within the team to continue the process of improvement. Regular local authority reviews have proven to be helpful in identifying where progress has been made and in agreeing next steps.