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Mr Mark Watts
Head of school
Nottingham University Samworth Academy
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Dear Mr Watts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Nottingham University Samworth Academy

Following my visit to your school on 23 April 2016, 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that, for each action, the improvement plan clearly identifies the expected outcome and how this will be evaluated by members of the governing body
- secure pupils' communication skills, particularly in reading
- ensure leaders at all levels use the school's system effectively for checking pupils' achievement to improve the quality of teaching and secure more rapid progress of pupils

- ensure that the information on the school's website meets statutory requirements, particularly in relation to reporting how the school spends additional government funding.

Evidence

During the inspection, I had meetings with the head of school, other senior leaders, subject leaders, and members of the local governing body and the board of directors, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and analysed the school's latest achievement data and governors' minutes. I visited five lessons in English, mathematics and science. I spoke with pupils during the visits to lessons, as well as during breaktime, when I also observed pupil behaviour. I checked the school's safeguarding procedures.

Context

The school is currently undertaking consultation on a proposed merger of its academy trust with three other academy trusts. The school has recently appointed a head of science and a member of staff who will be responsible for whole-school literacy. These new members of staff will take up their posts at the school in September.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders have undertaken appropriate steps to act upon some of the areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection report. Leaders responsible for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, have taken decisive action to ensure that pupils learn about the world around them. Pupils receive opportunities to learn about their well-being and their role as citizens in the school and global community through weekly themed assemblies and the more effective use of tutor sessions.

Senior leaders have taken action to ensure that the pupils attend the school more regularly. There has been a continued strong focus on managing pupils' behaviour and providing support for potentially vulnerable pupils. School leaders have also promoted positive attitudes to learning through assemblies and tutor sessions. Because of this, the proportion of pupils who are absent from the school is now below national levels, including those pupils who are regularly absent. The rate of exclusions has also continued to reduce. However, the proportion of pupils who receive more than one exclusion has not reduced quickly enough.

The work you have undertaken to improve pupils' outcomes, particularly in science and mathematics, has not yet secured sufficient progress in pupils' learning and achievement. For example, the outcomes that school leaders currently anticipate pupils to achieve in GCSE mathematics for both this year and next are not high

enough to secure the necessary improvement in the subject. For both academic years, the school's performance information suggests that the proportion of pupils who will make the progress expected of them will be below current national levels. Furthermore, the proportions of pupils currently making the progress expected of them in English and mathematics in years 8 and 9 are not high enough. This is because pupils' communication and mathematical skills are not sufficiently developed. The new subject leaders of English plan to review the effectiveness of the strategies that the school uses to improve pupils' communication skills, particularly in reading. However, this review has yet to take place.

Senior leaders have developed a more precise system by which they check on pupils' progress. In so doing, they have ensured that the targets pupils receive are appropriately challenging. Subject leaders are currently receiving training to use this system to monitor the quality of teaching and secure more rapid progress in pupils' outcomes. However, not all subject leaders' knowledge of this new system is sufficiently secure. Consequently, their use of this new system to improve the quality of teaching is currently not effective enough.

Governors are aware of the actions that you and your leaders have undertaken in response to the areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection report. Governors offer appropriate support and challenge. However, their role in evaluating the impact of the actions that the school leaders have undertaken is not sufficiently defined. This is because the governors do not have a clearly assigned role within the school's improvement plan to be able to evaluate the impact of the actions that school leaders undertake. Furthermore, the actions within the improvement plan lack sufficiently precise outcome measures against which members of the governing body can evaluate impact. You have agreed to resubmit this improvement plan to me by the end of May, identifying for each action precise expected outcomes. You will also identify how members of the governing body will evaluate the impact of these actions.

Your school website does not meet with statutory requirements. The information relating to how the school spends the additional government funding is not up to date. Consequently, it is not clear how school leaders are using this additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have fallen behind in either their communication or mathematical skills.

External support

The school has worked closely with local schools to create a curriculum and assessment structure that develops the pupils' skills appropriately. This structure provides regular opportunities to assess pupils' progress and to work with the other schools to check on the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work. The work has not had sufficient impact to date, however, on increasing the pupils' rates of progress. The school has brokered effective support from the academy trust of which it is a part and from the local university to support teachers in their

professional development. The school works successfully with local agencies to support pupils' well-being, to secure their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to reinforce positive attitudes to learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector