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23 January 2015

Mrs Jo Campbell
Headteacher
Armthorpe Shaw Wood Academy
Mere Lane
Doncaster
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Dear Mrs Cambell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Armthorpe Shaw Wood Academy, Doncaster

Following my visit to your academy on 22 January 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2014. It 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the two heads of school, middle leaders and two representatives of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy improvement plan was evaluated, as well as other documentation relating to this. We visited lessons to observe teaching, talk to pupils and look at their work.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit the substantive headteacher has resigned. The academy is led by you, the Executive Headteacher and two Heads of School. This forms part of the governor's plan to secure the future leadership of the school.

Main findings

Teaching is improving at a pace because you and the heads of school systematically and rigorously check on the quality of teaching. From this you support and challenge teachers in a timely and proportionate manner. The focus on improving teaching is relentless, but is being managed in a way that is motivating staff to improve their practice. You are drawing upon the expertise within school as well as that of external partners. A culture of learning and improving together for the good of the pupils has developed very quickly.

You hold staff to account more rigorously for the impact of their work through improved performance management systems. Teachers are expected to account for the progress their pupils make and explain how they will tackle any underachievement. Where necessary you provide additional support for those pupils who need it. As a result gaps in achievement are closing fast.

The changes you have made to the curriculum in reading, writing and mathematics are further motivating and engaging pupils. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do, and need to do, is increasing. There is more challenge in lessons, with a focus on deepening and broadening pupils' knowledge and understanding of what they learn. You check closely on the effectiveness of these changes and revise them when and where needed.

Changes in how the academy manages behaviour is ensuring pupils are motivated to work hard and achieve well. Behaviour logs show a reduction in incidents and pupils feel they have a voice that is heard, respected and understood. In most classes visited, pupils were hardworking, attentive and fully engaged in their learning.

Middle leaders are more confident and able to lead and manage improvements in teaching. They have received the training and support they need to do this. They know what impact their actions are having because, they are using a variety of tools to check on standards of teaching, the effectiveness of the curriculum and the progress pupils make. For instance, training on using work scrutiny effectively is enabling them to check more rigorously on the quality of teaching and learning over time and verify what teachers are saying about the progress pupils are making. They have observed teaching, but know this is an aspect of their work which needs further development. They are actively seeking the support and training they need for this.

The governing body has taken decisive action to secure the future of the academy. The appointment of you as executive headteacher to work with the two heads of school has provided a strong and sustainable model of leadership. Governors are very well informed about how the academy is doing and what progress is being made with the areas for improvement. They seek to check on what leaders are saying by visiting the academy regularly and by questioning. You have introduced robust systems for checking and sharing information about pupil progress which

means governors are very clear about how well pupils are doing and how gaps in achievement are closing for particular year groups and groups of pupils.

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

External support

You make effective use of the expertise in local schools to increase the knowledge and skills of leaders and teachers. Leaders have worked with two local schools to help develop skills in using work scrutiny effectively, as well as to improve specific aspects of teaching. An external consultant and a Specialist Leader of Education have supported the middle leader for mathematics to develop the curriculum and the knowledge and skills needed to lead and manage the subject effectively. Although a stand-alone academy, you have actively sought local authority support and that of the local partnership of schools for specific aspects of your work such as, the development of assessment without levels and ensuring teacher assessment is accurate.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer

Her Majesty's Inspector