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Mr John Innes
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Innes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Balby Carr Community Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 12 October 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 May 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and the governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I scrutinised academy documents and evaluated the academy's improvement plan. I visited classes with you and other leaders, had discussions with students and examined the work in their books and folders.

Context

The Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

The headteacher and senior leaders are taking swift and purposeful action to tackle the weaknesses identified at the last section 5 inspection. Leaders have an accurate view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and know what needs to be done to move the academy to good.

Students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are improving. The academy is more orderly and students are more polite and respectful to adults. Students respond more confidently to teachers' questioning and their books and folders show a growing pride in their work.

Leaders have a more secure view of the attainment and progress of students because teachers' assessments are more accurate, and senior and middle leaders are routinely checking that they are correct. However, teachers do not always make good use of this information and, as a result, the work set for some students is still too hard or too easy. Leaders are only just beginning to use assessment information to identify when students are underachieving and, in a more timely way, provide the extra help students need to get back on track.

Higher-quality marking in books and folders is helping students to identify and correct errors and misconceptions in their work. However, students do not always develop and deepen their knowledge and understanding well enough because they have too few opportunities to use and apply what they are learning, for example by solving problems or tackling exam-style questions.

The academy's improvement plan is closely linked to the areas for improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. However, it does not focus sharply enough on how key groups of students, especially disadvantaged students, will make faster progress. The plan does not have specific and measurable enough targets for these students or describe how and when the academy's actions will be monitored and reviewed.

The governing body is already better informed about important areas of the academy's work. Governors are unafraid to challenge when improvement is not swift enough. The Chair of the Governing Body recognises the need for a sharper focus on the progress of disadvantaged students and is keeping a close eye on how effectively leaders are acting on the recommendations from the academy's external review of the use of pupil premium.

Further action should be taken to strengthen the academy's improvement plan so that the plan:

- clearly identifies how the progress of key groups of students, especially disadvantaged students, will be accelerated
- includes more specific and measurable targets for different groups of students
- sets out how and when leaders will check whether their actions are making the necessary difference.

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

External support

Wakefield City Academies Trust has added much to the academy's drive for improvement. The headteacher and senior leaders are rigorously held to account by colleagues from WCAT who are systematically checking important areas of the academy's performance. Support is being effectively targeted and is starting to have a positive impact on students' attitudes to learning and the quality of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Doncaster, the Secretary of State and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nick Whittaker
Her Majesty's Inspector