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9 July 2015

Mr Rupert Stead
Headteacher
North Liverpool Academy
120 Heyworth Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L5 0SQ

Dear Mr Stead

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to North Liverpool Academy, Liverpool

Following my visit to your school on 8 July 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2015. 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. The school should take further action to:

- Ensure that the progress of key groups of students, especially the most able and those who have a disability or special educational need moves swiftly towards being at least in line with others, including in the sixth form.
- Ensure that attendance continues to improve rapidly, both in the main school and in the sixth form.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you as Principal, the Executive Principal, a group of middle leaders and of students. I also met with representatives of the Governing Body and the Chief Executive of the Northern Schools Trust, which sponsors the academy, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The academy's development and action plans were evaluated and found to be fit for purpose. I also met with a group of middle leaders. I made a brief tour of classrooms to check behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. Additionally I scrutinised a range of documentation relevant to the academy's work, including records of students' attendance and progress over time and a variety of policies. The single central record was checked and found to meet requirements.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in April 2015, two new Vice-Principals, an Assistant Principal and two teachers, as well as a data manager, have joined the school.

Main findings

You and the Executive Principal, senior leaders and governors have set for the school a very clear and determined direction that is impressive, given the short time since the last inspection. You have also begun to establish a strong culture of uncompromising attitudes to any underperformance. This has allowed you to make a speedy start to the process of 'getting to good.' High-quality systems and procedures are now in place, to secure improving outcomes for the students, who are at the heart of the academy's vision.

The roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders have been clarified, as part of your re-structuring of the staff. Middle leaders respond well to this clarity. They are perceptive and knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for development. You have made some strong and astute appointments at senior level and these too are adding capacity to the leadership and management of the academy.

Governors talk eloquently and convincingly of how they contribute to the academy's wider community and their work to keep students safe from risk outside as well as inside the academy. Governors appreciate the more open culture that you have fostered. This is helping them to challenge the academy with increasing confidence. This is also because through the Trust they can now access a rich seam of objective information about the academy's performance.

Improving outcomes for students are evident in assessment information for 2014/15 held by the academy. The proportion of students who make and exceed the progress expected of them in English and mathematics is improving and standards

are beginning to rise in the sixth form. This is because of a more rigorous approach to matching study programmes more tightly to students' skills and talents.

The academy knows that there is more work to be done to ensure that all students achieve equally well. Senior leaders must now ensure that any gaps in the progress of key groups, such as those who are disabled or have special educational needs, disadvantaged students or the most able are swiftly narrowed, including in the sixth form.

These signs of improvement are a result of your very logical, well-phased approach to the school's improvement, together with a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching. The academy's records show that teaching over time is mainly good, although there are occasional lapses into teaching that is less than good. You identify weaker teaching quickly and are quick to provide support and challenge to under-performing teachers.

The new behaviour policy is securing more consistently good behaviour from students. They move sensibly around the school, are attentive in lessons and enjoy knowing exactly what teachers expect of them.

Students relish the responsibilities they have for the various student voice committees which they chair. This involves them in service to the school and wider community. For example, students participate in charity fund-raising, organising drama and musical productions and promoting care for the environment.

Students and their families have increasingly high aspirations, as demonstrated by the rapidly increasing proportion of students who move on to higher education after Year 13. The academy keeps its curriculum under regular review and you are careful to adjust it according to the changing, precise learning needs of the students and to new national priorities.

Everything that the school does is carefully considered and regularly and honestly evaluated. This has enabled the academy to begin to tackle the recommendations from the last inspection report effectively and to demonstrate strong capacity for the further improvement of the school.

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

You, senior leaders and governors are well supported by your executive headteacher and a range of independent expert consultants who act as critical friends to the academy. Your Chief Executive from the Northern Schools Trust is highly committed to being actively involved in the academy's improvement, so that it becomes good in the shortest possible time.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool and as below.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- Department for Education [if the school is a non-maintained special school]
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