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Mr Gareth Williams
Winstanley Community College
Kingsway North
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Dear Mr Williams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Winstanley Community College

Following my visit to your academy on 18 January 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 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 June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in June 2015, the academy was also judged to require improvement.

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

The academy should take further action to:

- review the action plan to identify which leaders, including representatives of the governing body, evaluate the impact of each action. The plan should make clear the outcomes against which they will measure this impact
- ensure that governors act on all recommendations from the external review of governance. This includes ensuring that governors continue to challenge senior leaders over the impact of actions they take to improve pupils' progress and that they clearly record these challenges in the meeting's minutes.

Evidence

During the inspection, I had meetings with the Principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders of English, mathematics, science and humanities, and four members of the governing body to discuss the actions that the academy has taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the academy's whole-school action plan, analysed the academy's latest achievement data and considered the external review of governance and governors' minutes. I visited five lessons across a range of subjects in Years 7, 9 and 11. I spoke with pupils during these visits to lessons, as well as during breaktime, when I also observed pupil behaviour. I checked the academy's safeguarding procedures.

Context

Since the last inspection, the Principal in place during the inspection has left the academy. One of the academy's vice-principals is now Principal and has been in place since the beginning of January. A new head of science started in post in September 2015.

Main findings

You, your senior leaders and governors have taken appropriate steps to act on the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. Your action plan focuses on ensuring the most-able pupils make the progress they should and that middle leaders share best practice. You recognise that some of the actions lack the necessary detail by which you can measure their impact. You also recognise that it is not always clear who will evaluate the impact. You have agreed to resubmit this action plan to me by the end of January. You will clearly identify which leaders, including governors, will evaluate the impact of the actions the academy has undertaken and how they will measure this impact.

Leaders at all levels have taken effective action to raise the expectations of the most-able pupils and to ensure that teachers plan to meet their needs. Leaders have provided training to all staff on challenging the most able and on using performance information to plan for future learning. Consequently, teachers now have a greater understanding of their responsibility to ensure that all pupils, but particularly the most able, make the progress that they should. The majority of the pupils that the lead inspector met with were aware of their targets. Furthermore, they felt that their targets were challenging and spoke of the support teachers offer them on those occasions where they are falling behind. The academy's own performance information indicates that the proportions of Year 10 and 11 pupils making the progress expected of them in English and mathematics are improving. The proportions are either in line with, or moving towards, national levels. Where pupils are falling behind, senior leaders work closely with subject leaders to ensure that these pupils receive appropriate support. Subject leaders regularly review the impact of this support.

There has been a strong focus on providing middle leaders with the opportunity to share good practice and to check on the quality of teaching in their subject areas. Middle leaders now meet more regularly to discuss pupils' progress. They also work more closely together to share knowledge, discuss good practice and support each other in developing their leadership skills. Middle leaders have adopted a robust process by which they check the quality of teaching in their subject areas. They conduct short visits to a number of classes, undertake formal lesson observations, look at pupils' books and take into account the progress pupils are making. Consequently, middle leaders have a sharper understanding of the quality of teaching in their subject areas and provide support and challenge to teachers where it is required.

Governors have been quick to undertake an external review of their leadership role within the academy. This review includes further training that governors are undertaking imminently. Governors have already acted on some of the recommendations from the report, including linking themselves with individual subject areas. Because of this review, governors have a clearer understanding of their role in checking the impact on pupils' progress of any actions senior leaders undertake.

External support

The academy has drawn effectively on a variety of sources of external support. Middle leaders have engaged with a local high-performing school in order to support the development of their leadership skills and to identify examples of good practice that they can adopt at Winstanley Community College. Subject leaders of English, mathematics and science attend county subject networks, where they are able to share good practice. Senior leaders have also arranged for support from external agencies for new subject leaders. Engaging with these external agencies has enabled subject leaders to sharpen their leadership skills and ensure that they have a precise focus on improving the quality of teaching and increasing the rate of pupils' progress. You, the Principal, are engaging with the Leicestershire Secondary Heads Association. This is proving effective in providing you with the support you require in your new role.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth

Her Majesty's Inspector