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14 February 2013

Miss Catherine Teale
Principal
Mablethorpe Primary Academy
High Street
Mablethorpe
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Dear Miss Teale

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Mablethorpe Primary Academy

Following my visit with David Carter Her Majesty's Inspector to your academy on 12 and 13 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, the Executive and Senior Executive Principals, senior leaders, representatives of the academy council and two groups of pupils. Inspectors also met informally with parents and carers on the playground as they brought their children to school. Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 16 teachers.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

Context

The academy opened in September 2012 and is part of the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust group of academies. Three hundred and twenty four pupils are on roll at the academy. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above the national average. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and support through the pupil premium (additional government funding) is above average. Fewer pupils than average speak English as an additional language. Almost all staff employed by the predecessor school are now employed by the academy. A successful bid has been made by the Trust to improve the academy's buildings by upgrading the heating system. Work is due to start on this project in the coming weeks. A speech and language unit operates on the academy site. The unit is funded by the local authority and supports pupils from other local schools.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Children begin the academy with knowledge and skills well below those normally expected for their age. The academy's information about pupils' progress indicates that pupils in each year group made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics during the Autumn term. Inspectors found that work in pupils' exercise books confirms that they made good progress overall. Children make particularly strong progress in the school's Nursery class, due to excellent teaching. Despite their good progress overall, across the school pupils' standards are below those normally expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in each year group.

Different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and, separately, those pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional government funding) are making good progress. This is because the academy tracks the progress they make very carefully and also checks that any additional support they receive is helping to close the gaps between themselves and their peers. A number of additional groups operate to help pupils catch up for their previous underachievement. For example, older pupils who have fallen behind in writing take part in a Fresh Start programme to reinforce their understanding of the sounds that letters make and in developing basic writing skills. The programme was introduced through the Trust partnership and there are early indications that it is successfully accelerating the progress of the pupils involved.

Effective teaching is ensuring that pupils are making good progress in developing spelling skills and in using grammar and punctuation more accurately. However, there is too much variability across the school in the presentation of pupils' work and in the quality of their handwriting. This is because staff do not make their expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation clear enough. Pupils in the speech and language unit were observed being taught well and making good progress in developing their communication skills in a calm environment. Most

parents and carers who spoke to inspectors during the inspection believe that their child is making good progress at the academy.

The quality of teaching

Pupils have made good progress since the academy opened because the large majority of teaching meets their needs. A published scheme to teach speaking and listening, reading and writing has been purchased and rolled out across the school. This is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. However, some teachers stick too rigidly to the planned activities in the scheme, and do not adjust their teaching to meet the needs of pupils well enough. For example, in Key Stage 2, pupils learned to spell challenging words without fully understanding their meaning. They moved on to a new activity quite rapidly when time would have been better spent reinforcing the meanings of the words they had learned to spell.

During the inspection, no inadequate teaching was observed by inspectors and the majority was judged to be good or better. In the best examples of teaching, teachers and teaching assistants skilfully question pupils during lessons to clarify their thinking and develop their understanding. Teachers also ensure that activities in these lessons are pitched at just the right level for pupils through careful checking of their work, and by making frequent references to pupils' individual targets.

Teaching assistants provide discreet and effective support for pupils in lessons, particularly those who find learning difficult, disabled pupils, and those with special educational needs. Combined with good teaching, this is helping to close gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils.

The school's partnerships with other academies in the Trust are supporting better teaching in a range of subjects. For example, physical education and modern foreign language lessons are often led by specialists from neighbouring academies. The additional expertise is helping to raise expectations, share good practice and improve the quality of teaching.

Teachers do not mark pupils' books well enough to help them to understand the next steps of learning they need to take. Teachers adhere to the school's marking code by consistently using a set of agreed symbols in pupils' books. However, teachers do not make comments frequently enough and inspectors found a number of pieces of unmarked work. When teachers do make useful comments in pupils' books they often do not check that pupils respond to them and, as a result, their comments make little impact on pupils' improved progress.

Teaching activities, trips and the topics and subjects that pupils learn about make a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils' cultural development was promoted effectively during a recent joint production, with other Trust academies, at a theatre in Skegness and also through a separate trip to London.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils were observed behaving well during the inspection in different areas of the academy. Pupils explained that there are high expectations of their appearance and that the same high expectations apply to their behaviour. One boy told inspectors: 'We have to do our top buttons up now. We weren't used to doing that before but I think that it definitely look smarter.'

Appropriate support is provided for those pupils who find it difficult to behave well. As a result, there are very few interruptions to the learning of other pupils in the academy. Discussions with parents, carers and pupils indicate that this behaviour is typical in the academy on a day-to-day basis.

Pupils consistently told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school and were observed enjoying learning. However, their attendance is below average. Appropriate systems are in place to improve pupils' attendance, and the academy is supported by an educational welfare officer employed by the Trust.

Pupils have a well-developed understanding of safety issues for their age. Older pupils enjoyed telling inspectors about a recent trip to Rotherham, with other academies in the Trust, to learn from the emergency services about how to stay safe. The trip resulted in clear gains in their learning and safety awareness.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

Senior leaders have a good and accurate understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. This is because they use data about pupils' progress effectively and also make regular checks on the quality of teaching.

Leaders have clear ideas about how they want the academy to develop and improve. However, action plans do not always relate to the academy's current priorities, and timescales and milestones are not always precise. Unless addressed, this will make it difficult for senior leaders to fully gauge the effectiveness of the academy's actions on raising pupils' achievement.

The academy council has been formed and includes a representation of parents and carers. Representatives of the council have a clear understanding of their role but have not yet had sufficient time to make a strong impact on improving the academy. However, the Senior Principal and the Executive Principal ensure that the academy's leaders are effectively held to account for the academy's performance. Clear systems of accountability have been established at all levels, including an appropriate system to manage the performance of staff.

Leaders are working successfully to improve the quality of the curriculum, and this is supported well through an increased range of visits and activities. Most parents and carers who spoke to inspectors believe that the academy is well led and managed,

and that the transition to become an academy has gone smoothly and has been well organised.

The academy is engaging well with parents and carers. During the inspection, meetings between pupils, parents, carers and academy staff took place so that pupils' reading, writing and mathematics targets could be shared. The event was very well attended and parents and carers told inspectors that they found their conversations with staff to be informative and helpful. A very small minority of parents and carers believe that teachers are too firm with pupils when controlling their behaviour. Inspectors found no evidence of this during the inspection.

Leaders' careful tracking of the progress made by different groups of pupils and the accelerated progress of different groups of pupils, including those who have fallen behind, indicate that the academy is promoting equal opportunities effectively.

External support

Appropriate support has been provided by the Executive Principal, the Senior Executive Principal and other senior leaders from the Trust. This has enabled the academy to get off to a smooth start and experience very few teething problems. The Principal and Deputy Principal have appreciated the additional support received from the Trust, particularly linked to financial management and the management of human resources. This has given them increased capacity to teach, support teaching and also to check the quality of teaching across the academy to help raise pupils' attainment. The academy continues to access training provided by partners working on behalf of the local authority. This ensures that a good range of professional development opportunities are available to staff.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of leaders' action plans, so that they focus solely on current priorities and have clear timescales and milestones, to enable senior leaders and the academy council to check progress more rigorously.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - making sure that staff do not become dependent on using published schemes to help pupils to learn, so that all staff have the confidence and skills required to adapt activities to fully meet pupils' needs
 - ensuring that teachers have clear, consistent and high expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation
 - making sure that all teachers mark pupils' work frequently, make constructive comments to help pupils to understand the next steps of

learning they need to take, and ensure that their comments make a positive and sustained impact on pupils' learning and progress.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer

Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Chair of the Governing Body, Mablethorpe Primary Academy
The Academies Advisers Unit, DfE