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27 June 2014

Miss Colette Jones
Headteacher
South Leeds Academy
Old Run Road
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Dear Miss Jones

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of South Leeds Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 25 and 26 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's most recent monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged as having serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in June 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:
The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The Board of Trustees' statement of action is fit for purpose.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the Director of Children's Services for Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Ian Richardson

Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2013

Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good to ensure attainment at the end of Year 11 continues to rise and all students make at least good progress, by leaders making sure that:

- staff's expectations of what the students can achieve and the progress that can make are raised
- all lessons provide all students, regardless of their academic ability, with engaging work which is appropriately challenging and meets their needs and interests, and all do not do the same work
- teachers ensure students respond to, and implement their feedback and the next steps for learning and all teachers check how this has moved learning forward as a result
- all staff use the agreed strategies to develop students' literacy skills in their lessons
- lesson activities focus on what the students need to learn, not on completing tasks
- homework is regular and extends students' learning beyond the classroom.

Sharply focus leadership and management on improving teaching and the progress students make by:

- ensuring there is an effective, and rigorous, monitoring of teaching at faculty level to secure consistently good practice
- continue to work with parents to improve attendance.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 June 2014

Evidence

The inspector met with the acting Principal and the regional director of education for the Trust. He also met the acting Principal with five assistant Principals. He held meetings with three teachers, three middle leaders and five students from the student leadership team. The inspector observed seven lessons jointly with five members of the extended leadership team. The inspector, jointly with the acting Principal, carried out a series of short visits to several classes to evaluate the behaviour and attitudes to learning of students. The inspector met with the Chair and four other members of the Board of Trustees. The purpose of the monitoring inspection was to review the quality of teaching and learning, evaluate the progress of students and the progress of the academy against the improvement plan.

Context

At the time of the monitoring inspection, the Principal was not present and had been absent for several months. During the period of absence of the Principal an associate Principal has stepped into the role of acting Principal. There were no other changes of senior leaders. The

number of teachers leaving the academy has allowed the appointment of new staff to the academy, including several newly qualified teachers. There have been appointments of some new directors of learning since the first monitoring inspection.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The senior leaders of the academy are bringing about improvement. Despite staff turbulence, including long-term absences, the senior leaders are providing clear and coordinated leadership. The core of senior leaders at the time of this monitoring inspection consisted of the acting Principal and five assistant Principals. Each member has a clearly defined role and good links with staff in their areas of responsibility. Senior leaders provide a strong and coherent team that functions effectively. The extent of their collaboration leads to a common understanding of key issues and the need for consistent practice in the academy. Individual senior leaders are well informed about the work of others and demonstrate good understanding of how their roles connect to provide strong leadership.

In interviews with middle leaders and teachers, they gave a clear account of the priorities for the improvement and management of the academy. Changes in leadership over the past year are spoken of positively by staff and middle leaders describe how they are involved now in bringing about change and that they feel their views are listened to and accommodated in planned improvements. They described in detail how their work relates to the academy's priorities and the systems in place to support their work and to call them to account. Accountability now permeates all aspects of the academy's life. The well-organised and comprehensive database of performance informs the work of all staff. These performance data cover not only attainment and progress but also key areas for the academy, such as quality of learning and teaching, attendance and behaviour.

Interviews with students and longer-serving members of staff revealed how much students' behaviour and readiness to learn have improved. Students, while recognising there is a need to improve further, describe how behaviour has improved over the recent past. During the monitoring inspection, the overall learning environment was substantially one of calm and good order. This was seen during movements around the academy and in a joint 'learning walk' in which the acting Principal and inspector visited a number of lessons briefly to evaluate the behaviour for learning. In observations carried out jointly between inspector and senior leaders, students were well behaved and showed good relationships with teachers and other students. In all lessons seen, senior leaders and the inspector agreed the standards they had seen and also identified features in common. Where students were less disposed to learning, teachers persisted and modelled their expectations for students. The evaluation of teaching and learning shows improvements since the Ofsted inspection. There is a rigorous personalised support programme aimed at eradicating inadequate teaching and raising standards overall to good.

The Board of Trustees' statement of action is now fit for purpose. This is a consequence of closer collaboration with senior leaders and a refocusing of the board's contributions. The frequency of meetings of the Board of Trustees has increased and closer associations with aspects of the academy's functions have been forged. The trustees recognise their role of challenge and support for senior leaders and they give clear examples of these in their renewed relationship with the academy. Now that there are link trustees assigned to areas of development in the academy there is a clearer view of progress. Trustees meet staff from their areas of responsibility and report to the Board of Trustees using notes of visit. There is

also an increased accountability as academy staff are challenged by trustees to give reports on issues that have received their attention.

Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- The action plan continues to be used well for checking progress since the Ofsted inspection. Senior leaders also regularly update their self-evaluation summary document.
- The senior leaders working in collaboration with middle leaders of the academy have continued to collect performance data assiduously that show the progress made by students.
- The tracking of performance in the academy indicates that the outcomes for the academy in 2014 will improve on those seen in 2013.
- The collection and analysis of performance data are carried out and moderated by working with others, such as leaders from associated academies, the regional director of education and the academy improvement officer of the Trust.
- The increasingly robust and informative data are used in quality assurance measures and in establishing accountability of middle leaders and teaching staff.
- The challenge to the work of faculties is clearly set out in the quality assurance framework for 2013 to 2014. This framework ensures all staff are involved in the improvement process.
- In the framework, the responsibilities of directors and leaders of learning and subject teams are clearly set out as are those for assistant Principals and the senior team.
- There is increasing collaboration between staff who feel greater involvement in bringing about improvement. The principles and aims expressed by senior leaders are understood by staff who also recognise the improvements made over recent months.
- Throughout their work, both teachers and students value the initiative called 'Red for reflection'. This initiative establishes a procedure by which teachers provide written evaluative comment on students' work and the students have time to reflect and make responses to teacher's comment in red pen. When interviewed, students described positively how much this helped them to improve.
- Teachers have welcomed the increased support they receive and the clarity of information regarding their role and the senior leaders' expectations. Teachers describe how continuing professional development is provided in relation to their needs.
- Behaviour for learning, an evaluation of students' attitudes and their readiness to work, remains a key area for development in the academy. The senior leaders are measuring changes in this and capturing it as part of their thorough monitoring.
- Attendance data are monitored and improved attendance is a key aim for the academy. Attendance data show improvement during this year although attendance is still below the national average.
- Senior leaders have instituted a restorative process focused on improving students' behaviour and this is impacting positively, including on students' attendance. A carefully designed strategy for getting students on track for learning has resulted in very significant reductions in the incidences of fixed-term exclusions.

External support

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection the Board of Trustees has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose. Beyond the support offered by the Board of Trustees there is external support offered through the

sponsor, the School Partnership Trust Academies. The sponsor has a core improvement team that engages with the academy leaders. There is challenge and support for the leadership team provided by the regional director of education and the academy improvement officer. Two officers of the local authority is a member of the Board of Trustees. The academy collaborates well with other academies and mutually gives and receives support.