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15 January 2013

Mrs Sam Williamson
Principal
Dover Christ Church Academy
Melbourne Avenue
Dover
CT16 2EG

Dear Mrs Williamson

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Dover Christ Church Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 15 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the Principal, other senior leaders, the acting Chair of the Governing Body and eight other governors. A separate meeting was also held with four governors who represent the sponsors of the academy. The academy improvement plan and related documentation were evaluated, alongside student achievement information for English and mathematics. The HMI also carried out a tour of the academy with the Principal.

Context

The Principal has been appointed on a permanent basis.

Main findings

The Principal and senior leaders know the academy well and what it needs to do to improve. The Principal has made appropriate use of the recommendations from the

section 5 inspection to adapt the academy's development plan. However, the development plan does not set out clearly what will need to be achieved for the academy to become good by the time it is next inspected. Additionally, it does not consistently identify the people, methods and timescales required to evaluate the effectiveness of proposed actions.

Students currently in Year 11 are making better progress in English and mathematics than before. This is due to better teaching including identifying and tackling gaps in students' subject knowledge. Teaching staff have been redeployed to achieve this improvement. The academy struggles to recruit and retain permanent staff in English and mathematics. As a result, some classes are taught by temporary teachers and students make slower progress than they should due to a lack of continuity in teaching.

Governors are committed to improving the academy in the face of significant challenges including falling numbers of students in the local area, staff redundancy and a deficit budget. Governors now recognise the need for a clearer strategic overview of the academy's goals and progress towards them. Governors were clear that they need to show greater urgency in tackling the barriers that prevent the academy from being good.

Senior leaders, the governors and sponsors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the academy, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- ensure that sponsors and governors urgently set clear strategic goals and timed milestones to effectively monitor and evaluate the academy's progress towards becoming a good school
- sharpen development plans to meet strategic goals by identifying the people, methods and timescales required to check the effectiveness of proposed actions
- ensure leaders and sponsors work effectively together so that mathematics and English vacancies are quickly filled with highly effective teachers.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The academy has commissioned effective support from external agencies to develop teaching and learning and assist sharper self-evaluation. The sponsors have provided some support to professionally develop teaching staff. The National College for School Leadership were carrying out a review of governance on the day of this visit.

I am copying this letter to the acting Chair of the Governing Body and as below.

Yours sincerely

Peter Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector