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Debbie Morrison  
Principal  
Kingsthorpe College  
Boughton Green Road  
Kingsthorpe  
Northampton  
NN2 7HR

Dear Ms Morrison

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kingsthorpe College**

Following my visit to your school on 26 June 2014, 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 second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. 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 academy should take further action to:

- ensure that the feedback teachers give to students is consistent, particularly regarding the presentation of written work
- ensure that student achievement improves in the sixth form
- provide more opportunities for students to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, three representatives of the governing body and a representative of the academy's sponsor to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. You took me on a tour of the academy and we visited several classrooms.

## **Context**

You became Principal of the academy at the beginning of this term. Seven teachers have left the academy since my last visit in October. Another eight will leave at the end of this term. You have recruited 17 new teachers. Of these, six are currently working at the academy, including an assistant principal in charge of teaching and learning and lead practitioners in English and Science; nine teachers will begin next academic year. From September, you will have a full complement of subject specialist teachers.

## **Main findings**

You have brought a huge amount of necessary energy to the academy. Your enthusiastic and open approach has invigorated teachers and students. Members of staff are responding positively to the challenges that you have given them and students are making better progress as a result. You led by example and taught mathematics daily to two groups of Year 11 students up until their examinations. Teachers from the mathematics department joined you in holding extra lessons in the holidays and on Saturdays for those students preparing for their GCSE examinations. As a result, these students made better progress in this subject area.

You have increased the level of analysis which takes place in judging student achievement, and you and your senior colleagues are holding middle leaders to closer account for underachievement in their areas. Middle leaders make a significant contribution to the academy's professional development programme, which is helping teachers improve their practice.

As Year 11 and Year 13 students have now left the academy, their teachers of English and mathematics are offering support in other year groups, including taking over whole class teaching from supply teachers. The academy's current data reflect a recent increase in progress, particularly at key stage three and in English and mathematics at GCSE level. These improvements must be replicated in the sixth form where achievement is not yet good overall.

The quality of teaching in the academy is improving. Teachers now benefit from a wide variety of training, some of which is bespoke. Three-quarters of teachers whose practice, at the time of my last visit, required improvement are now judged to be good. Eight teachers are currently on an outstanding teacher programme which is helping them to further improve their good practice.

Teachers regularly share best practice and the academy uses social media effectively in this regard; teachers tweet links to resources they have found useful. Not only do teachers appreciate the material, the process has helped create a 'buzz' around improving practice and trying new approaches. As a consequence, lessons are livelier and students' attitudes to learning are improving because they find their learning of more interest.

Teachers are better meeting the needs of individual students. Teachers have had training on making their lesson objectives more focused for students of differing abilities. More-able students are benefiting from a greater degree of challenge via teacher questioning, though this is not consistent across the academy.

The feedback teachers give students on their written work has improved since my last visit in terms of frequency and the quality of direction given. However, it is still not good enough. Best practice is not consistent across the academy. Many teachers accept work that is poorly presented and this includes those teachers whose marking is otherwise good.

Students now have more opportunities to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. Pastoral tutors are given a weekly literacy activity to complete with their groups. Each faculty has a literacy champion who identifies opportunities for development in their subject areas, including compiling lists of subject-specific vocabulary, particularly for those students who have special educational needs. This variety of strategies has raised the status of developing good literacy skills, though some gains are lost because they are not supported through teachers' feedback to students. Not enough attention has been given to developing opportunities for students to develop their numeracy across the curriculum and this remains an area for development.

Members of staff now work more closely with families to improve students' attendance and reduce the number of exclusions. New, more stringent home-academy contracts have been agreed by parents and these have had a positive effect. While attendance remains just below the national average, it has improved since last year. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has reduced by half. Fewer students have been excluded when compared to last year.

Since my last visit, one governor has resigned, three have been recruited and the Chair of the Governing Body has become a National Leader of Governance. Governors have successfully led the reorganisation of the academy's senior leadership team. As a result, senior leaders are now more focused on their individual responsibilities. All members of the governing body undertook a skills audit. This has led to some reorganisation of committees; the process also identified training needs, some of which have now been met, particularly regarding understanding student progress data. The chair leads the governing body very well and governors hold senior leaders to account more rigorously than they did at the time of my last visit.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

## **External support**

The academy sponsor and the governing body led on the appointment of the academy's new Principal. The sponsor has brokered support for the academy via consultants who have quality assured judgements made on the quality of teaching. Two consultants also contributed to the academy's professional development programme which has been well-received by members of staff. A new academy improvement partner has been appointed by the sponsor, though it is too early to judge any impact.

A teaching school has provided very effective support to the academy's mathematics department.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire, the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**