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Mrs Pat Dubas
The Principal
The Samworth Enterprise Academy
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Dear Mrs Dubas

Academies initiative: monitoring visit to The Samworth Enterprise Academy

Introduction

Following my visit with David Jones HMI to your academy on 18 and 19 September 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was a first monitoring visit in connection with the academies initiative.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the principal, vice principal, core subject, phase, and aspect leaders, groups of pupils, and two governors. Informal discussions were held with staff, parents and community police officers.

Context

Samworth Academy is a new purpose built all age academy, for pupils aged 3 to 16 years of age. It is a growing academy, currently for pupils from Nursery to Year 8, and will grow year on year until the full age range is accommodated in 2011. It is a Church of England academy and, uniquely, includes a parish church within the

academy building. The admissions criteria do not include criteria linked to faith. The academy caters for pupils from 'all faiths and none', but does promote a Christian ethos. The criteria place the school firmly in the context of the local community and give priority to the most vulnerable pupils. Just less than half the pupils admitted came from the predecessor infant and junior schools, with just over half either coming from 29 other schools, or attending school for the first time. The majority of pupils are from Saffron and Eyres Monsell in Leicester, areas of significant social economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very high. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than the national average, and is increasing. The academy is over subscribed in all year groups except Year 8. It experienced a significantly high level of both inward and outward pupil mobility during the last year.

One third of the current staff transferred from the predecessor schools. A small percentage of staff left during the last academic year, and 36 new staff have been employed this year. This number is made up of 13 new teachers, 8 teaching assistants, and 15 other support staff. A key achievement of the academy is successfully bringing together staff and pupils from a number of other establishments and the significant impact it has had on its pupils and the community in its first year.

Achievement and standards

Baseline assessments carried out on entry to the academy indicate that the prior attainment of pupils entering Nursery and Reception classes is well below national expectations. Baseline assessments also indicate that the overall prior attainment of pupils joining the rest of the school in September 2007 is well below national averages. These baseline assessments were carried out because prior attainment data was not available for all pupils. There is a very wide ability range in every year group.

Current standards are well below average throughout the academy. Provisional results of the recent Key Stage 2 tests in science and English confirm the academy's own data, that results exceeded the academy's targets; although both were below national averages. The communication skills of a significant proportion of pupils are very weak, and are a key area for development. The academy was disappointed with the provisional results in mathematics, which were significantly below the national average. Results in the Key Stage 1 assessments in 2008 were inadequate.

Although standards remain too low, pupils' progress over the last year has been satisfactory overall, although overall progress in Key Stage 1 was inadequate and progress in mathematics at Key Stage 2 was considerably below the academy's targets. The academy has an effective system for tracking progress and reliable performance data for each pupil. This data shows that the progress of some targeted pupils in some areas was good and for some, outstanding. In addition, in some specialist subjects, pupils made good progress.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall and good when provided with challenging tasks that engage their attention. Many are prepared to take greater responsibility when it is afforded them. On some occasions inappropriate behaviour develops where pupils are bored or are seeking to avoid a task they find difficult to access with some pupils behaving in an uncaring manner. However, the academy has done well to maintain a low rate of exclusion. Attendance during the last academic year was above the national average. Senior staff, rightly, now have a greater focus on punctuality; on the first day of the monitoring visit more than 25 pupils arrived via the car park gate after 8.50 am. Movement around the school is generally calm and orderly. However, some staff do not intervene when pupils run and more needs to be done to ensure that agreed procedures regarding movement are maintained as they will be important when current pupils are older and larger.

The younger pupils, in particular, are pleased with the restaurant provision and enjoy the healthy eating options available, although all pupils noted that the lunch time queuing restricts the time available for recreation and sport.

Senior staff have successfully drawn parents and pupils from the large number of schools into the wide range of opportunities and support that is available. Community cohesion is seen as a key role for the academy and this is supported by the presence of St Christopher's Parish Church within the new school building.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is currently satisfactory, with a good proportion of better teaching. Positive features of the best lessons are very good relationships and clear high expectations regarding both achievement and behaviour. Teachers have good subject knowledge and the pace of learning keeps pupils interested. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to articulate their thinking, and make good use of relevant practical, interesting activities. For example, in one mathematics lesson, appropriately, Year 5 pupils were highly engaged in using cubes to develop their understanding of multiplication. In a religious education lesson, pupils were collaborating well to explain their beliefs. In good lessons planned learning is sharply focused on pupils' needs through good use of the data. Teachers are analysing this data to identify and support pupils who are not doing as well as they could.

In most lessons behaviour is good. This is because teachers are consistent in their expectations and in their use of behaviour management procedures. However some staff, particularly in Years 1 to 4, are not consistently applying agreed behaviour management procedures and, as a result, pupil behaviour in some lessons is inadequate. This is compounded because teachers are not all planning lessons which fully engage and interest pupils. Thus, not only do some lose interest, but also opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills are missed. In some lessons,

tasks are not fully matched to pupils' needs and teaching strategies do not promote independent learning.

Additional inconsistencies relating to the quality of teaching and learning include inconsistent planning regarding the role of teaching assistants to support learning. Marking is too inconsistent. Whilst some is of high quality, giving pupils clear feedback on their work and giving them clear guidance as to how to improve, in some cases marking is limited or has not been carried out this term. The academy acknowledges that the effectiveness of marking, the use of targets, homework, pupils' self evaluation and peer evaluation during lessons are areas for development. However, parents and pupils have been involved effectively in reviewing progress over time and in contributing to the setting of targets for improvement.

Pupils are very positive about the academy and the opportunities it offers them to develop as young citizens. They speak positively about their future ambitions and the resources made available to them. However, pupils of all ages are keen to have even greater access to computers and more taught physical education; they were keen to have a greater range of literacy lessons and drama opportunities. Pupils from all year groups were keen to have better access to outside play equipment.

The academy has specialisms in business and enterprise. Food technology is a core area of this work and features in the learning experiences of even the youngest pupils. Good links exist with the local food processing industry and representatives of the business community contribute to the extended school provision. The academy has begun to develop its support for other local schools through this emerging area of expertise. The impressive extended school programme includes a wide range of sport and exercise related opportunities; currently more than half of the pupils access this provision on a weekly basis. A broader range of skills and academic based experiences are on offer for the first time in the current school year. The academy is developing a wide range of contacts with schools in the area in order to draw on their specialist expertise.

All of the requirements of the National Curriculum are available for each year group. However, as pupils enter the academy with limited literacy and social skills more needs to be done to develop the pupils' oracy and problem solving skills. The academy has conducted an audit of the progress pupils have made in core curriculum areas and has expanded the number of experienced secondary specialist teachers. However, with the first cohort of pupils already in Year 8, the time available to finalise the development of examination courses is limited. While planning is underway, the development of curriculum pathways throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 to guide pupils towards appropriate careers education, and the academic and vocational choices that will need to be presented to them and their parents in less than 18 months is not sufficiently swift.

The Early Years and Foundation Stage provision has developed appropriately during the first year of the academy's existence. The Nursery and Reception classes have a spacious indoor and outdoor environment. Staff are aware however, that as yet,

covered provision for outdoor play is too limited. Appropriate learning stimuli were provided; but adults are missing opportunities available for small group and individual challenge to enhance the children's personal development and language skills. The academy has identified, through its data on the communication and language skills of pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, that inconsistencies in the pupils' grasp of phonics and the decoding skills required for reading need to be addressed through a structured whole school approach.

The academy provides crèche facilities each morning for children under three years of age. Further developments of the accommodation and care available required to secure Early Years registration are in hand; this provision will be inspected as part of the whole school provision at the first Ofsted inspection in the next academic year.

The care, guidance and support for pupils is outstanding. The academy truly goes more than 'the extra mile' to remove barriers to learning. It works extremely hard to address the many and varied needs of the pupils. A range of adults work closely together to support different aspects of this area. This work is carried out in partnership with a significant number of external partners, pinpointed to give the best support for individual pupils. Staff and these colleagues work in partnership with parents and also provide support and training for parents. A number of parents and pupils are provided with one to one programmes where pupils are at risk of exclusion, some of which take place off site. Pupil progress in terms of both learning and personal targets is monitored closely.

Safeguarding is rigorous and meets government requirements. However, the academy's chemical storage facilities do not meet current health and safety requirements for dedicated external ventilation. The governing body should deal with this as a matter of some urgency.

Leadership and management

The academy, to quote its own booklet 'One year on', 'has established a safe yet stimulating environment in which children can learn and extensive, sustained support for children and families'. Pupils' enjoyment and strong support for the academy are the result of the dedication of the entire staff community. The principal, who initially took up her post in a temporary building on the building site and who has worked tirelessly to drive improvement, provides strong decisive leadership. The deputy principal and senior leaders are equally committed and work together to provide outstanding senior leadership. Through the induction programme and by focusing on team building, they have effectively built an equally dedicated staff team, which is committed to improving its practice. Performance management is linked to the assessment system set up to track pupil progress and staff are highly aware that they are responsible for the progress of the pupils they teach. Through self-evaluation, senior leaders know the strengths of the academy and the key areas for development and are highly effective in prioritising these areas. They are rightly challenged, but also well supported, by the strong governing body. Middle leadership

is developing as the academy grows in size with middle leaders being given appropriate support and development to ensure consistency of practice.

In all these aspects, the school demonstrates good capacity to improve.

External support

Partnership working is a key strength of the academy and it takes full benefit from a range of very effective support provided by numerous other organisations. These include the School Improvement Partner, the local authority behaviour support and looked after children teams; psychology services; multi-agency professionals; and educational consultants. Other partnerships, for example with the church, local schools, Uppingham School, Aylestone Football Club, and Leicester City Hospital School, also enhance provision and help the academy to raise attainment. Liaison with the local further education college and higher education providers is being developed to support pupils' education and raise aspirations in the long term.

Main Judgements

The academy has made satisfactory progress towards raising standards.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure all teaching and learning is consistently good or better.
- Develop pupils' communication skills and independent learning skills.
- Accelerate the development of Key Stages 3 and 4 learning pathways.
- As a matter of urgency address the health and safety issues identified with regard to the storage of chemicals.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education for Leicester, and the Academies Group at the DCSF and the local authority.

Yours sincerely

Heather Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector