



Department
for Education

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Karl Wainwright
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2nd November 2015

Dear Karl.

Please pass on my thanks to Di Beddows and Rick Carroll, for receiving Rosemary Prince's recent visit to the school and for sharing the response to this summer's results at Key Stage 4.

The regional office of the Department for Education has four priorities:

- to develop the capacity of multi-academy trusts to support others
- to support and challenge for underperforming academies
- to increase the number of free schools
- to encourage greater collaboration to develop a self-improving school led system

A crucial part of the RSC role is to hold academy trusts to account for the performance of any schools in their trust. We decided that the best way to understand what is happening in schools was to visit rather than rely just on published data. Our Education Advisers made over 200 visits to academies last year and gained a strong understanding of the individual issues each school faces and the actions being taken to improve outcomes for pupils. Visits are generally for half a day or less and aim not to be a burden on a school.

Where progress or plans for improvements are not sufficient, taking into account Ofsted reports and contextual information, then formal intervention such as pre-warning and warning notices will be considered. Last year after 200 visits to academies just 11 pre-warning notices and warning notices were issued; as you know Ernulf was one of these.

Rosemary enjoyed her visit back to the school and was grateful for the opportunity to understand more about your future plans. Clearly there was disappointment that the headline figure of 36% for pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades with English and maths was not higher; next summer's outcomes will be very important.

Despite the headline figure there were some positives. Expected English progress reached 72% with 60% of pupils achieving an A*-C grade. In maths, expected progress rose 20% to reach 60%, however, just 46% of pupils achieved an A*-C grade. The school is confident that the new head of maths and the rest of the team are having impact, as these results demonstrate; previously gaps in knowledge limited what could be achieved in the short time they worked with pupils.

Sorting the right leaders and quality of staffing has been a priority since the removal of the headteacher last term. Rosemary noted the specific changes that have been undertaken in both MFL and Science. Beyond this, analysis has looked at gaps in predicted vs actual outcomes and started to line up teaching more closely with new syllabi in tandem with the focus on aiding pupils to surpass minimum expected grades. There is still much work to do especially in ensuring both the consistency of use and quality of different forms of feedback.

Whilst visiting lessons, Rosemary noted the work which has been started to raise standards but also considered areas where work was required to better implement initiatives. The use of green pen marking was widespread but not everyone was using it in the same way. The volume of work recorded in books had increased though the quality of recording varied, more regular marking was happening but pupils did not always complete advice tasks set, sometimes because staff did not allow sufficient time. Literacy targets are starting to be prominent. Rosemary reported that there was no doubt that big strides have been made to ensure actions happen which impact on learning. The next step is to encourage this work to become second nature and of the highest quality.

The pupils Rosemary spoke to are positive about the changes and about the greater emphasis on their achievement. She heard good comments about the classroom relationships and work expectations in much of English, maths, drama and humanities. Science appears to be an area where the new approach is not yet working; pupils have picked up on the anxiety felt by teachers as they try to balance the volume of content with the understanding of their pupils.


There is no doubt the pupils wish to be successful. Most describe good relationships with each other and their teachers, along with a readiness to do what they are asked. To this end it might be a good idea to increase attendance at revision sessions, making them mandatory for particular pupils. The pupils Rosemary spoke to felt some pupils would do better if revision sessions were made mandatory. Perhaps time limited attendance of say three sessions for a particular topic would also help to focus minds.

In previous academic years, we have often followed up visits with a request for an update via what we have called a 'scorecard'. We intend this year to reduce the burden of this request by asking instead for a copy of updates provided by headteachers to their academy trusts about predicted results for summer 2016. I would find it very helpful if in the next few weeks you or the Headteacher could let me know (most easily via RSC.EASTNELONDON@education.gsi.gov.uk) the schedule you have for

updates during the year to the trust on expectations for results next summer. I am aware of the plans for the leadership of the academy thanks to the helpful updates Rick has provided.

We know that the work of academy trustees, school leaders and teachers is very demanding and we know that you do it because you believe that the pupils for whom you work deserve the best education possible. We are pleased to be working with you on this.

If Rosemary can be of further assistance please feel free to contact her directly at rosemary.prince@education.gsi.gov.uk

Yours sincerely


Tim Coulson
Regional Schools Commissioner, East of England and North East London

cc Di Beddows, Acting Headteacher

cc Rick Carroll, Executive Headteacher and CEO

