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Ms Maclean  
Tudor Grange Academy Worcester  
Bilford Road  
Worcester  
WR3 8HN

Dear Ms Maclean

## **Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of Tudor Grange Academy Worcester**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit, with my colleague Kevin Sheldrick HMI, to your academy on 26–27 January 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Executive Principal.

### **Context**

The Tudor Grange Academy Worcester predecessor school, Elgar Technology College, was an 11–16 secondary school which was subject to special measures. The academy has changed its specialisms to science and enterprise. Tudor Grange Academy Worcester opened in September 2009 with the support of its sponsor Tudor Grange School, Solihull (later Tudor Grange Academy Solihull). Most staff transferred from the predecessor school and there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team and subject leadership. There have been problems in ensuring all subject areas have been suitably staffed. The academy has introduced through age tutor groups which include students from Year 7 to Year 12. A sixth form was opened in September 2010 in



conjunction with the sponsor school. The academy had no new accommodation, but building work is due to start in March 2011.

The academy is a smaller than average. There are currently 715 students on roll, including 53 in the sixth form. The academy has had far more pupils trying to gain entry to Year 7 next year than it has places available. Students' attainment on entry is below the national average; the proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average as is the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very large majority of students are of White British heritage and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is very low.

### **Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning**

The academy has successfully raised attainment levels above those of its predecessor school. In GCSE examinations in 2009, 44% of Year 11 students in the predecessor school gained at least five A\*-C grades. In 2010, 82% of the students matched this benchmark, although the proportion who gain at least five A\*-C grades including English and mathematics is still low because of the considerable underachievement of students in these subjects prior to the academy opening. The progress information collated by the academy shows that attainment in these subjects is due to improve significantly this year. The strong emphasis on raising the proportion of students who achieve a grade C or better has brought about significant improvements in many subjects, particularly science. However the proportion of students who gain grades A or A\* is well below average, often because students who are capable of reaching these grades have not been sufficiently challenged.

In the majority of subjects students make good progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. The academy also ensures students, who may otherwise fail to complete their studies, follow an adapted curriculum and this prepares them well for their futures. The academy's tracking information shows that students made satisfactory progress in mathematics and English from the time the academy opened. Observation of lessons in these subjects shows that progress is variable, with some being very strong whereas in others less so. This does however indicate a considerable improvement.

The sixth form is in its very early days of implementation and offers a variety of level 2 and level 3 courses including both A level and vocational options. Some students commented that they had stayed on in the academy as they were known well by their teachers and the academy was prepared to let them start their courses when they may otherwise have left education.



## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

A major success of the academy has been the way in which students now respond well to the effective climate for learning. Their behaviour around the academy and in lessons is generally good. Students commented on the significant improvement and how unruly and extremely poor behaviour were common place previously. The behaviour has also received praise from local businesses that are now happy to welcome students into their premises whereas previously they were banned. Attitudes to learning make a clear contribution to improved academic progress and good personal development. A consequence of the strong drive to improve behaviour has been a large number of exclusions and the academy is rightly aware of the need to reduce these as expectations become firmly established.

Attendance is improving although it is still low. The academy is particularly vigilant in ensuring all students remain on site after they have registered as they were aware that many students used to abscond and not attend lessons. Preparation for the next stage of students' education and for their futures is improving with rising standards and improving personal development. Students are able to identify and record, how they are improving their key skills during the skills, action and service sessions.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

A combination of a good curriculum which meets students needs well, good pastoral care, improving teaching and learning and additional lessons and support, have meant that standards have risen significantly. The establishment of appropriate pathways throughout all key stages has meant that courses are better matched to individual's needs. The 'foundation' area supports potentially more vulnerable Year 7 and Year 8 students well and ensures a better transition from primary to secondary education. At the start of Year 9 students select from a wide variety of courses associated with three different pathways. The academy is building on the expertise of its sponsor academy to develop opportunities for students to take examinations early. This helps maximise their potential as well as meeting the needs to students who are less engaged with a variety of different activities and experiences, including fishing. The skills, action and service sessions are greatly enjoyed. Students also become more aware of the differences between groups for example a class were observed enjoying playing wheelchair basketball and realising the huge challenges of having a disability. These sessions contribute greatly to the development of work place and other key skills. However opportunities to promote literacy and numeracy in other subjects are not systematically planned or delivered.

The quality of learning is improving and is often good, although as the academy rightly identifies there are still a significant number of lesson where the teaching needs to be more engaging and challenging, particularly for the potentially higher attaining students. In the best lessons teaching is well planned with learning activities being appropriately matched to the needs of the students. Lessons have a



good pace and a sense of urgency. Learning activities focus on progressive steps which are well explained and effective assessment informs planning for the next stage. Good relationships between staff and students are a common feature and good use is made of the electronic whiteboards. However when teaching is only satisfactory lessons often lack challenge and are too teacher dominated with few opportunities for students to work independently.

Procedures for pastoral care are very clear and well structured with through age tutor groups, so that staff know their students well, including those with special educational needs. Additional mentoring and carefully tailored support ensures students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable succeed at the academy. Provision within the sixth form is still in its early days and its full impact has not yet been able to be evaluated, although the academy is aware that some students have concerns about certain aspects. Students follow their courses either in Worcester or travel to the sponsor academy in Solihull.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers**

The very strong leadership of the Principal, very well supported by her senior team has set a clear strategic direction that is understood and shared by all staff. There is a strong commitment in ensuring individuals succeed. There are clear policies and procedures in place, including those for safeguarding students and for evaluating performance. Senior leaders have a secure evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and are giving effective support to try and ensure all teaching becomes at least good. However middle leaders have not yet consistently monitored the quality of learning in their curriculum areas in order to identify areas for improvement and then put in place support.

The specialist areas are used well to support improvements to attainment. Science has become a very successful subject and developments in place have extended the courses available, including a group who will take separate GCSEs in physics, chemistry and biology. The self-evaluation is accurate and is used to identify priorities for improvement. There is a very well formulated development plan which includes challenging, but realistic success criteria. Governance is strong and effective. The governing body, which was initially made up of governors from the sponsor, has now been extended to include more local members. Good use is made of staff from Solihull to support curriculum areas and leadership and at times experiences from the Worcester academy have been used to influence practice in Solihull. The Executive Principal has a clear overview of developments as well as offering day to day support and advice. Both she and the Principal have identified that they need to be less operational and more strategic and have developed the skills of other senior leaders to allow this as systems and procedures become fully embedded. The Principal has identified the need to work more closely with partner primary schools within the area. The academy has demonstrated, through its sustained improvement that it has a good capacity to improve.



## External support

Staff and expertise from the sponsor academy in Solihull has been the main source of additional support. The School Improvement Partner has been worked closely with the academy and his support and challenge has been well received. School Improvement Partner reports have helped identify areas for development.

## Main Judgements

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Raise achievement, particularly in mathematics and English by ensuring:
  - greater challenge for potentially higher attaining students
  - staff, from all subject areas, plan and incorporate opportunities for students to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- Improve further the quality of learning by ensuring middle leaders take greater responsibility for accurately identifying areas in need of development in teaching and supporting colleagues to bring about improvements.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Group at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith

## Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Dr Peter Rock, Chair of the Governing Body  
The Academies Group, DfE [ Paul.hann@education.gsi.gov.uk ]