

Serco Inspections  
Colmore Plaza  
20 Colmore Circus Queensway  
Birmingham  
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T: 0121 679 9168**  
**Direct email: [beverley.joyner@serco.com](mailto:beverley.joyner@serco.com)**



13 February 2013

Zara Harrington  
Acting Principal  
West Grantham Academy Spitalgate  
Trent Road  
Grantham  
NG31 7XQ

Dear Mrs Harrington

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The West Grantham Academy Spitalgate**

Following my visit with Frances Le Pla, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 5 and 6 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 16 May 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures. I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers, at its own discretion.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Academies Advisers Unit of the DfE, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Diocese of Lincoln.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2012

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that they are consistently good or better by:
  - tailoring the work set so that it provides manageable challenge for all pupils
  - giving staff more opportunities to share and build on good practice, using strengths from within the trust
  - ensuring expectations are consistently high for all pupils in all classes
  - rigorously monitoring and evaluating pupils' work and the quality of teaching across the academy, putting the emphasis on learning and developing teachers' accountability for pupils' progress.
  
- Accelerate progress and raise attainment, ensuring that all pupils make at least the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
  - improving pupils' skills in constructing sentences, punctuation and spelling and increasing opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum
  - developing and consolidating basic calculation skills and their application to mathematical problem-solving activities
  - developing an academy approach to teaching handwriting and correct letter formation
  - developing and implementing an academy marking policy, ensuring that target setting and marking procedures consistently give pupils a clear understanding of their next steps for learning.
  
- Develop learning experiences for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - ensuring each activity, whether led by adults or chosen by the children themselves, has a clear learning purpose and is suitably challenging
  - giving children daily opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in a structured manner, so children are better prepared for Year 1.
  
- Strengthen the capacity of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
  - reviewing and revising the roles and responsibilities of the leadership team so that it is more effective in driving school improvement
  - developing a rigorous approach to assessing reading, writing and mathematics so that data used for tracking pupils' progress are reliable and accurate
  - developing the role of the Board of Directors in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, and holding leaders to account.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 5–6 February 2013**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Acting Principal, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the West Grantham Academy, nominated senior and middle leaders, support staff, three representatives from the governing body, groups of pupils and a group of four parents.

### **Context**

There have been a number of staff departures and arrivals since the last monitoring visit, with two teachers returning from extended periods of absence and one new teacher joining the school at the start of the spring term. The senior leadership has been restructured and appointments have been made to the new roles. The extension to the Spitalgate building has been opened, complete with a new classroom for Year 2 pupils, and the classroom accommodation at the Earl of Dysart site has been completely reconfigured.

Consultation has started on the formal merger of the federation's two primary schools, with the intention that this will be implemented in September 2013.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

The academy has successfully maintained the drive to raise standards, most notably in mathematics and English. Assessments of pupils' attainment and progress show a positive picture of acceleration over the autumn term, right through from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6. This assessment information shows that the academy's systematic approach to every aspect of pupils' literacy, including their handwriting, is paying off. However, although there is much to commend, the academy team accepts that, for many pupils, standards are still too low because weaknesses in reading and writing remain a barrier to their wider learning and progress. Moreover, improvement has not been equally impressive across all classes. Reasons for this vary, but are often linked to the individual circumstances of pupils. Importantly, the academy has a very thorough approach to using its data: the Acting Principal holds regular pupil progress meetings with teachers from every year group so that the performance of each class and its pupils can be scrutinised in minute detail. From this, additional support is carefully targeted, and adaptations made in the academy's provision. For example, in Year 2 classes, the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) has been restructured and additional afternoon sessions on reading for comprehension have been introduced for some pupils.

Evidence from lesson observations, from pupils' books and from talking to pupils themselves, supports the academy's view that achievement is rising. Lessons are sharply focused and briskly directed, with an awareness that learning time is

precious. No time is wasted at the end of break periods, and transitions between different activities are seamlessly managed. The quality of learning was good in almost all sessions observed. Tasks were pitched at a suitable level of difficulty for each group, and pupils rose to the challenge of working hard. For example, children in Reception made remarkable progress in selecting and sequencing time connectives, such as 'next' and 'finally', to retell their stories.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has strengthened, even in the short time since the last visit. Teachers returning from absence or new to the academy have quickly applied the now-established routines, so that common approaches to lesson planning, behaviour management and use of assessment are embedded across all classes. There is excellent communication between teachers and also with support staff, including shared planning, so that all adults understand the purpose of each session and what needs to be done to support individual pupils and groups. Teaching was good in most of the lessons observed. The strengths noted previously have been consolidated and teachers are directing lessons with more confidence and with evident enjoyment. Teaching is purposeful, but the pace and quality of learning varies because some teachers are more successful than others in directing the pupils' work. Teachers use a good range of different resources, including the interactive whiteboards that the pupils enjoy using, to make learning fun and to promote pupils' independent learning. Year 3 pupils, for example, enjoyed using different instruments to explore onomatopoeic vocabulary.

Assessment information is used well in planning lessons so that work is pitched at the right level for each group. The learning outcomes are shared with pupils at the start of each session so they also know what they are aiming for, although these are not always specific enough. Teachers then use their questioning to consolidate prior learning and to skilfully probe pupils' understanding, assess their progress and extend them appropriately. Marking is a key strength, particularly in English and mathematics. Teachers work very hard to keep up to date, and give detailed feedback so that pupils know how to improve. The pupils, in return, are responding to this advice by correcting their mistakes and putting the guidance into practice.

The Acting Principal checks that teaching is up to standard and is quick to identify strengths and share these with other staff. On the other hand, when aspects of teaching need improvement, these are swiftly pinpointed so that support can be provided, primarily by the two teacher mentors who are now in post.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils respond to the academy's high expectations and behave well. Some of the youngest children struggle initially but, by this time of year, they are settled and happy. Parents commented that their children miss school at the weekends! Parents,

pupils and staff agree that behaviour is good. The pupils' positive attitudes to learning are reflected, not only in the way that they settle quickly and sustain their concentration but also in their increasing enjoyment of learning and their willingness to do homework. As they grow in confidence, pupils work with greater independence. In general, they know where they can find help, for example from 'synonym circles' or 'working walls', although they are not in the habit of using dictionaries to check word meanings or spellings.

The academy's efforts to improve attendance have had a positive impact, particularly in reducing levels of persistent absenteeism. However, bouts of illness since Christmas have dented the impressive attendance figures achieved in the autumn term.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The Acting Principal continues to lead by example and drive the academy's recovery with remarkable skill and boundless energy. Morale is high, despite the fact that staff are under pressure to deliver results, because they feel properly supported and consulted. Although raising achievement is the key focus, every step is taken to assure the pupils' wellbeing and to ensure that every child has equal opportunity to thrive. Parents value the support that staff provide for them and their children.

Leadership capacity is being increased at all levels, including governance. Since the last visit, significant steps have been taken to develop middle and senior leadership. Although it is too early to judge the impact of these new roles, plans have already been implemented, for example, to increase pupils' number fluency and raise the profile of mathematics around the academy. The Academy Trust is well informed and its strategic leadership and management role has been strengthened. Governors make regular visits and are provided with timely, clear and concise information about the academy's performance and progress, so they are able to balance their support and challenge.

### **External support**

The academy continues to take full advantage of external support and guidance, particularly in regard to learning from good practice. A recent mathematics visit has helpfully identified a number of areas that can be strengthened.