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11 March 2013

Mr Jed Donnelly  
The Executive Headteacher  
Peak Academy  
Drake Lane  
Dursley  
GL11 5HD

Dear Mr Donnelly

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Peak Academy**

Following my visit with Lesley Cox Her Majesty's Inspector to your academy on 7 to 8 March 2013, 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 carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and senior leaders, teachers and support staff, and a representative of the sponsors who is also chairing the development of local governance arrangements. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 11 lessons and attended an assembly. A number of joint observations were undertaken with senior leaders as well as a learning walk around the academy and visits to a range of Key Stage 4 alternative providers.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all students.

### **Context**

Peak Academy shares the site with Greenfields Academy. Students and staff of both academies are completely integrated within all aspects of school life. Lessons include students and staff from both schools. There are 85 students on roll from both schools and 27 are from Peak Academy. Key Stage 4 students currently undertake

their studies at a range of alternative providers. The academy is about to open a temporary centre of study for some Key Stage 4 students in Gloucester. All students have a statement of special educational needs, primarily for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of students for whom the academy receives additional funding, as part of the pupil premium, is above that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, children in local authority care and children of service families.

There are now leadership arrangements through partnership with a successful special school. A senior leadership group has been established to work with the school until August 2014. The academy's current senior leaders took up their roles in November 2012 after a period with interim leadership arrangements.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

School leaders are acutely aware that students started in the academy with very low levels of attainment. Students are not making sufficient progress, but this situation is improving although attainment is still very low. There are now clearer systems to track students' progress. Assessment continues to be a key focus in driving improved progress. The moderation of students' work and support for staff in assessing the progress of students are in hand. There has been a great deal of effective work on developing literacy across different subjects. This is beginning to have a positive impact on student progress and is being increasingly planned for by teachers in their lessons. The academy leaders are rightly concentrating on making sure that all groups of students are making much better progress in all areas of study. Achievement tracking of Key Stage 4 students is not well developed but leaders are aware of the need to sharpen the focus, particularly with literacy and numeracy skills.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is improving as teachers are given a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills further; they are well supported by academy leaders and sponsor consultants. The strong support for literacy has particularly been appreciated by teachers and support staff. As a result, there is an increasing understanding of how to develop wider opportunities for speaking and listening, reading and writing. There are some lessons that promote good progress and in which teaching assistants are well deployed. In these lessons teachers use a range of opportunities to check learning and they adjust tasks accordingly throughout the lesson. The impact of teaching is inconsistent and some teaching does not bring about sufficient progress. The learning objectives are not always clear enough and so students can complete tasks but not meet individual learning needs. Targets for academic and personal development are evolving. Leadership and management of teaching and learning are strong. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths of teaching in the academy and are tackling weaknesses. There is still much to do. Plans are developing well to support staff with issues across the school as well as to provide more tailored support for individual teachers and teaching

assistants. Plans to implement effective performance management systems are underway.

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

Students' behaviour is improving. Behaviour management strategies are increasingly effective and there is a clearer focus on learning. Students are encouraged to engage with the learning opportunities; where staff are consistent and persistent, students' engagement in learning is developing well and they are becoming more successful. Students recognise how things have improved in the academy and that their school is becoming a closer community where relationships between students and with staff are improving. A uniform is worn with pride by some students and most are keen to earn points during lessons for their positive attitudes. When teaching is engaging, and challenges students, behaviour is positive and learning is stronger. The challenge is not always focused sharply enough for each student. Leaders are challenging attendance issues well. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.

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

The senior leaders of the academy are working well to establish a successful academy. The academy leaders and governors recognise the progress made so far and there is a clear understanding of the work ahead. Priorities have been established in order to bring about rapid and sustainable progress across the academy, and the leadership's consistency in approach is reassuring for staff. There is a strong determination to ensure students get a wide range of opportunities for them to grow and to be more successful. The development of high quality teaching is a key priority and development of coaching and wider support is underway. Leaders are aware that students need to make up a great deal of lost ground from previous years. Governors at sponsor level are tracking progress with a range of indicators and they are aware of the need to improve outcomes for students in all year groups. Plans to establish local governance are developing well.

### **External support**

The academy has provided strong support for leadership and the development of literacy. This support is already having an impact across the school. A wide range of external alternative provision is used in Key Stage 4. This needs further development to maximise the outcomes and secure positive learning pathways for all learners. Transport arrangements with external partners at times take too long to set up and so students are without provision during the interim period.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Increase significantly the progress of all students by developing the quality of teaching, particularly by using assessment strategies more rigorously to sharply focus learning opportunities for individual students.

- Improve the quality of provision at Key Stage 4 to make sure students are increasingly successful, particularly for literacy and mathematics, and ensure other areas of learning are quality assured with the same rigour as the learning that takes place on the school site.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Scott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**