

Tribal  
1–4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

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

**Direct T** 0117 311 5359  
**Direct F** 0117 315 0430  
**Email:** christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

17 April 2013

Mr M Trusson  
Principal  
The Taunton Academy  
Cheddon Road  
Taunton  
TA2 7QP

Dear Mr Trusson

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The Taunton Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 17 April 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the principal, the school's senior leadership team, the Chair, Vice-Chair and one other member of the Governing Body. The Vice-Chair is the representative of one of the sponsors. The local sponsors' statement of action and the academy's development were evaluated. The academy's single central record, which contains checks on staff appointments, was reviewed.

### **Context**

Since the inspection in February, one of the Vice-Principals has left the academy and the senior leadership team has been restructured to reduce the number of senior managers. An additional advanced skills teacher has been appointed and has taken up his post. A teaching assistant has also been appointed. Appropriate checks have been carried out to ensure that both are suitably qualified to work in schools.

The academy has occupied part of the new buildings which are being constructed on site.

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

The principal and senior leadership team are clear where improvement is needed. They are aware that it is imperative that the quality of teaching and learning improves rapidly and they have allocated responsibilities to ensure sufficient emphasis is placed upon the issues requiring improvement. While the academy's plans for improvement are specific in addressing the weaknesses and provide clear direction, the ways of judging when the priorities are completed are not matched closely enough to the academy's targets for students' progress and attainment.

The senior leadership team have begun to implement the actions which will bring about improvement. Coaching is being used to help weaker teachers improve and external support has also been bought to support this process. The academy has also looked again at its procedures for dealing with the underperformance of staff and used them where necessary. The academy is working with an outstanding school to develop the 'Taunton Academy lesson' which sets out the minimum expectations for good learning in lessons. Professional development has been provided on helping staff to match activities more closely to students' abilities and plans exist to introduce regular reviews of learning in lessons. Senior leadership 'walkabouts' to observe practice have been changed and now focus more tightly on students' learning outcomes. The intention is to review how teaching assistants support students' learning in lesson time in September 2013, but this planned implementation date is too far in the future.

Work has begun to ensure middle managers hold all staff to account more rigorously and so that middle managers are more directly held responsible for improvements. A new coordinator has taken responsibility for developing and keeping a check on specific action plans for vulnerable students, and progress has been made in placing a greater emphasis on supporting reading for younger students using tablet-based technology. A recently recruited parent governor has held focused meetings with a group of parents from the community and there has been an increasing use of parent forums to enhance communication with the wider community.

The governing body understands the challenges which face the academy and is strongly determined that the academy should improve. It understands its role in improvement and has purchased external support to help it with its monitoring. Governors now have a greater presence in the academy. However, the governing body is still currently discussing how, through its committee structure, it will keep a check on the progress made.

The statement of action has been prepared by the academy and not by its sponsors. The lead sponsor from the diocese is fully aware of this. The co-sponsor has played no role in the statement of action, which reduces its usefulness considerably. It is not fit for purpose. There is insufficient explanation of who is going to check upon the actions or evaluate the proposed improvements, and there is no indication about the level of resources that will be needed to implement the statement of action. All of the proposed actions have the same start date and, as a result of being prepared by the academy, there is no indication of any external support being provided by the sponsors.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The sponsors' statement of action is not fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the Director of Children's Services for Somerset, the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education, and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marcia Headon  
**Additional inspector**