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10 May 2013

Mr Christopher McShane  
Principal  
Winton Community Academy  
London Road  
Andover  
Hampshire  
SP10 2PS

Dear Mr McShane

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Winton Community Academy**

Following my visit with Patricia Metham, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 8–9 May, 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, conducted 19 lesson observations and a series of visits to lessons to look closely at the quality of work in books and marking. They scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, members of the senior leadership team, groups of students, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a regional director from the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). Inspectors also checked the academy's central register of staff.

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 pupils.

## **Context**

Winton Community Academy is much smaller than the average school, with 470 students on roll and a slightly higher proportion of girls than boys. Most students are White British, with a lower-than-average proportion belonging to minority ethnic groups. A few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly higher than average. About one fifth of students are identified as having special educational needs and requiring additional support within school. The proportion who have a statement of special educational needs or who require additional support beyond school is average.

Winton School closed and reopened as Winton Community Academy, sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust, in November 2012. The academy is on the same site as the predecessor school and all staff transferred over at the point of conversion. Since it opened, there has been some refurbishment of the existing buildings, including new science laboratories and a new canteen. Staffing has remained relatively stable. The recent long-term absence of the special educational needs coordinator has been covered within the senior leadership team.

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

Standards of attainment in English and mathematics for students entering the academy in Year 7 are significantly lower than average. In the past, attainment remained low across Key Stages 3 and 4 because students did not make enough progress in their time at the predecessor school. Academy leaders recognise the urgent need to reverse this historic trend of underachievement. Lessons observed during the inspection demonstrate that better teaching is beginning to accelerate students' progress. This is especially evident in mathematics, which has been a significant area of weakness in the past.

Mathematics teachers make good use of advice from an AET consultant about how to move learning on quickly in lessons. Students routinely evaluate their own progress and work with teachers to identify and fill gaps in their knowledge. In English, teaching is improving and many students now make good progress, well supported by detailed feedback on their work. However, the most-able are not stretched enough. This is true of other subjects too; far fewer students make exceptional progress than in good schools. Although teachers prepare students thoroughly for examinations, they do not always foster a love of reading or challenge them to think independently.

GCSE results just prior to the school's conversion to academy status showed a considerable improvement from a previously unacceptably low base. This was due to a more concerted and effective approach to raising standards. This improvement has

continued and developed; the academy predicts further, although modest, gains in GCSE results for 2013. Since conversion, systems to check on students' progress have improved greatly. Senior leaders use detailed information about students' progress to pinpoint who needs support and when best to intervene. This system exposes persistent gaps in achievement between different groups of students, such as between boys and girls in English. It is also beginning to show the academy's success in narrowing gaps in achievement, such as between students known to be eligible for free school meals and others. Disabled students and those with special educational needs generally make better progress than their peers, as a result of carefully targeted support.

A whole-school approach to improving students' basic literacy and numeracy skills is in development, but not yet having enough impact. Training, supported by an AET consultant, is helping teachers to understand how to develop basic reading and writing skills. Literacy mats provide a quick reference point for students looking for ideas for good sentences or more ambitious vocabulary. However, not all teachers have high enough expectations of students' written communication, or plan lessons that strongly promote good spelling, punctuation and grammar. A whole-school approach to reading is being developed, but implementation is too slow. Many students are good readers, but too many others struggle or are reluctant to read. Not enough is done to promote and encourage students' development as confident, independent readers in their daily lessons.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving because there are now well-organised systems in place to challenge poor performance and to develop teachers' skills. Coaching programmes are making adequate teachers better and encouraging good teachers to excel. Some teachers have left in the face of increased challenge and accountability for higher standards.

An academy-wide marking and assessment policy is now in place and beginning to influence students' progress, more consistently in some subjects than in others. Year 10 students showed inspectors how they review and reflect on their work by 'writing back' to teachers' marking and advice in their mathematics books. This is not equally effective in all subjects, although there are pockets of excellent practice. In art, students negotiated how teachers will respond to their sketch books, so that they get detailed feedback that does not interfere with the artistic concept!

Some teaching requires improvement because teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough, or because teachers plan activities that will keep students busy but not make them think. Where teachers do not follow the marking and assessment policy, students lack guidance and their confidence drops. Students praised one teacher for 'never moving on until she is absolutely sure that everyone has got it' but not all teachers carefully check understanding throughout the lesson and adapt their approach accordingly.

Outstanding teaching in an art lesson showed how students thrive when expectations are high. Year 9 girls worked at different levels on a theme of the ordinary and the extraordinary. They interpreted this open concept in entirely individual ways, then developed their art with confidence, using a range of media. They expressed real passion for what they were doing, and showed great confidence and pride in their work. They explained how, through art, they were developing their capacity to think more deeply about social and cultural issues, such as self-harm and the corruption of natural beauty.

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

Students' behaviour around the academy and towards adults is generally polite and courteous, despite some slight over-exuberance in crowded corridors. In well-taught lessons, students collaborate and support one another's learning willingly. However, students told inspectors that, despite improvements, there are still times when learning is interrupted by poor behaviour. They understand the systems for tackling this, including withdrawal from the lesson if necessary. They complained, however, that, while everyone gets a fair chance to learn from their mistakes, a few individuals had been given 'too many chances' without any real change to their behaviour over time. They appreciate the rewards system, but point to inconsistency in its use; previously irresponsible or unhelpful students are rewarded for a short spell of good behaviour, while those who behave well all the time go unnoticed. Most teachers enforce the academy's expectations of good behaviour in lessons, but there are exceptions. Where 'minor' infringements are ignored, such as outdoor coats being worn or sugary drinks drunk in class, this undermines the efforts of all.

Older students are more confident than younger ones about the academy's approach to bullying. All agree that it is not tolerated, but students in lower years feel that there is a piecemeal approach to the anti-bullying message. It is 'done' at certain times of the year, rather than all-pervasive and constant.

Attendance is improving. Although it is not yet at the national average, the gap is closing because of a more-concerted approach and clearer messages about the importance of good attendance. Persistent absence, although still too high, is dropping.

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

Improvement is now underway because the Principal and members of the governing body accept and understand the significant weaknesses that led to the predecessor school being placed in special measures. There is a sense of urgency about raising levels of achievement and improving teaching, underpinned by challenge from the sponsor. Senior leaders are committed to rapid change, although their strengths in driving it are variable. Improvement planning is not sharp or clear enough. Plans do not spell out in clear terms what getting to good will mean. Targets reflect expected

progress for most students, in line with national norms, but do not go beyond this to aim for good or exceptional progress. There are too many plans, and they are drawn up in response to each new evaluation rather than set out as a single, coherent strategy.

Members of the governing body are improving their ability to challenge the academy's performance by undertaking training and by working in partnership with the sponsor. They communicate a determination to drive improvement and to hold senior leaders, including the Principal, to account, but they remain overgenerous in their assessment of progress to date. The absence of a well-focused improvement plan with measurable targets and a clear timescale hampers their capacity to evaluate performance sharply.

Middle leadership is an area of growing strength. The leaders of learning now work as a team, with a shared sense of purpose and a clearer understanding of their role in driving improvement. They describe recent change as having 'relit a spark' in the academy, but they are realistic about how much needs to be done. They make good use of consultant support provided by the sponsor, as well as visits to outstanding schools, to develop new ideas to improve teaching.

Senior leaders review and adapt the curriculum to meet students' needs and to raise achievement. In Years 10 and 11, there is an appropriate focus on basic skills and on getting more students a good GCSE pass in English and mathematics. There is a targeted early-entry policy in mathematics, with entry points determined by students' readiness to achieve their target grade. Year 7 students learn through their evolve lessons, which are designed to bridge the gap between primary and secondary school. There is some withdrawal and regrouping of students according to social and emotional needs, or for literacy development, but with mixed success. Whole days devoted to learning themes, such as communication and innovation allow subject leaders to explore ideas more deeply. The impact of curriculum developments on students' achievement is beginning to show in Key Stage 4, but is less clear in Years 7 to 9, where there is a danger of skills- and activity-based learning distracting from strong reading, writing and mathematics development.

### **External support**

The sponsor makes regular checks on the progress of the academy and holds the Principal firmly to account for its improvement. It has provided the services of a School Improvement Partner whose evaluative reports are helpfully direct and hard-edged. Academy leaders welcome this challenge and respond by refocusing their efforts. AET consultants have had a good impact on the quality of teaching in mathematics and are supporting the development of whole-school reading and literacy strategies. The regional director keeps a close eye on developments through meetings with the Principal and the Chair of the Governing Body. He is in agreement with the inspection team that much remains to be done to increase rates of progress

and standards of attainment, but that the academy is now moving in the right direction.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Review and redraft the academy's improvement plan so that it is sharply focused on the main priorities for improvement, specifies what success will look like in terms of the impact on students' learning, and makes clear precisely when and by whom checks on progress will be made.
- Implement a whole-school reading strategy as a matter of urgency, that is focused on developing students' competence, confidence and independence as readers in all subjects, as well as their love of books, and that is not over-reliant on a single, commercial programme.

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

Christine Raeside  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**