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6 June 2013

Mr G Mason  
Principal  
De Lacy Academy  
Middle Lane  
Knottingley  
Wakefield  
WF11 0BZ

Dear Mr Mason

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to De Lacy Academy, Wakefield**

Following my visit to your academy on 5 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, and the academy's School Improvement Officer assigned to it by the School Partnership Trust Academies network (SPTA). A range of documentation was reviewed, including the post-Ofsted action plan, governing body minutes and notes of visit records by SPTA staff. A tour of the academy, which included visits to a number of lessons, was undertaken.

## **Main findings**

Senior leaders are determined to ensure that the academy is judged to be good or better when it is next inspected. An extremely detailed action plan has been put in place to bring about improvement quickly and the commitment and drive of the principal has been pivotal in this work. For example, the post-Ofsted action plan focuses clearly on each of the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. It sets down specific activities, the people taking responsibility for each issue, resources, deadlines, milestones and how monitoring will be undertaken. However, evaluation procedures are not clear, and there is insufficient reference to how governors will hold senior leaders to account. In addition, the plan, entitled Section 1, only covers the period from April to July 2013. Section 2, focusing on the next twelve months, will cover the same sections as the current plan. However, timescales for the production of Section 2 and for it to be signed off by governors before the end of this term have not yet been agreed. Discussions were held on the importance of drafting the next stage of the plan quickly and to considering how best to incorporate evaluation procedures by senior leaders and governors.

Evidence from the academy's monitoring procedures since the inspection indicates that actions taken are starting to have the desired impact. All staff are clear of what is expected of them and early returns from the 'DEMI dash' initiative indicate that teachers are responding effectively to focusing on developing their approaches to differentiation, engagement and marking. Additional training is being targeted to meet individual teachers' needs and this work is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching and on students' attitudes to learning. In addition, the latest assessment of students' performance suggests that more students are on track to achieve their targets. Action is being taken on all aspects of the areas for improvement at the same time. However, some initiatives, notably to improve parental engagement, are still in their early stages.

Governors meet frequently to discuss the work of the academy and to hold senior leaders to account. They regularly undertake training and benefit from using the local authority's governor improvement service as well as the support offered by SPTA. Governors are knowledgeable and focused on what needs to be achieved to help the academy improve. However, their work in evaluating the current action plan and in signing-off the next stage of the plan is not sufficiently clear.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- identify specific and discreet evaluation procedures for each aspect of the plan
- clarify within the plan the precise role of governors in ensuring that the actions identified bring about the necessary improvements within the next two years
- determine both the timescales for drawing up the next stage of the plan and the details of the plan so that it is finalised before the end of this term
- forward a copy of this plan to the monitoring HMI once it has been signed-off by governors.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

## **External support**

Senior leaders value the challenge and support provided by SPTA, especially by the network's designated school improvement officer, and by the opportunities offered through the network's commitment to school-to-school support. Senior leaders and the academy's School Improvement Officer have a clear understanding of how they can use the best practice from within the academy, as well as from within SPTA's network, to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, improve students' achievement and strengthen the effectiveness of leadership. As a result, the support and guidance provided so far by SPTA has been well tailored to meet the academy's needs.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing and as below.

Yours sincerely

Michael Maddison

## **Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority - including where the school is an academy
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.