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Antony Pinnock
Principal
Wreake Valley Academy
Parkstone Road
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Dear Mr Pinnock

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Wreake Valley Academy

Following my visit to the academy on 4 July 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, three Assistant Principals, the Chair of the Governing Body and the academy's improvement adviser. The academy's statement of action and improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

The roles and responsibilities of a number of Assistant Principals have changed since April 2013. One Assistant Principal has recently become Director of mathematics and retains responsibility for the leadership of teaching and learning. Another has become Director of science with oversight of achievement in Key Stage 4. One Assistant Principal has relinquished responsibility for the sixth form and now leads on the analysis of data and assessment information. A new Assistant Principal has been appointed to be Director of the sixth form. A former deputy headteacher has been

employed as a mathematics consultant, on a part time basis, to provide support and guidance to improve standards, teaching and leadership in mathematics.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders expected an overall effectiveness judgement of requires improvement at its inspection in April 2013. Senior leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body reported that the inspectors' focus on National Curriculum levels of progress in English and mathematics, rather than the predicted outcomes of GCSE in 2013, came as a surprise. This meant that the academy's view of its effectiveness and the quality of teaching and students' achievement were over-generous. Nevertheless, senior leaders and governors have accepted the findings of the report and did not challenge them. The academy's statement of action outlines what will be done to address the most important weaknesses, and suitable arrangements are in place to inform parents of the impact of proposed actions and how senior leaders will take their views into account. A suitable academy improvement plan has been produced and senior leaders and governors have made a good start in addressing the key priorities to improve teaching, achievement and leadership and management. For example, all staff attend weekly professional learning meetings where they plan collaboratively or attend workshops to improve their skills. Links have been made with a local outstanding school to provide coaching, training and help with data analysis to build the leadership capacity to further improve.

Governors have set up a monitoring and evaluation committee to oversee the progress being made to address the serious weaknesses. The Principal attends committee meetings and reports are received from staff and the academy improvement adviser. However, no independent educational perspective is provided to the committee to quality assure proceedings. It is recommended that this shortcoming is addressed quickly, in order that an independent, impartial view is gained about the extent of improvement, other than that provided by staff, leaders and others employed by the academy. The governing body has appointed new link governors to oversee developments in science, mathematics and the sixth form. The governors are mostly former educationalists and have the necessary background, experience and expertise to drive improvement. The aim of link governor visits and the questions to be asked on them have been agreed, and their foci are appropriately linked to key priorities in the academy improvement plan. The Principal and Chair of Governors now meet weekly to discuss if there any barriers holding back academy improvement and to review staff morale and progress towards any targets set in action plans.

On 23 May 2013, two representatives from the Department for Education (DfE) visited the academy to evaluate the progress made in addressing the serious weaknesses. They judged that there is good capacity within the senior leadership team for the academy to improve quickly. They reported that there are suitable plans to improve the effectiveness of subject leaders and that senior leaders have a good understanding of what is needed to raise standards, for example, by

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compulsory, focused professional development for teachers requiring improvement. Officials from the Academies Performance and Brokerage Division, within the DfE, will provide a scorecard, which the Principal will complete every six weeks, so that progress data can be reported and evaluated regularly by DfE officials, in order to measure the extent of improvement in raising standards.

All staff employed by the academy have been suitably vetted to confirm their suitability to work with children. Most, but not all, of the necessary recruitment and vetting checks are carried out on supply staff. The academy is not robust enough in verifying whether supply agencies have undertaken further criminal record checks on foreign nationals as required. The single central register does not contain a comprehensive record of the various checks undertaken. For example, records do not always specify the date and person undertaking the checks on the right to work in the United Kingdom, or the person undertaking qualification checks for support staff.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose

The academy's statement of action is fit for purpose

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Rzeznik
Additional Inspector