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12 September 2013

Tanya Prosser  
Principal  
Forest E-ACT Academy  
Causeway Road  
Cinderford  
Gloucestershire  
GL14 2AZ

Dear Ms Prosser

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Forest E-ACT Academy**

Following my visit to your school on Thursday 12 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking incisive and urgent action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, the Chair and another member of the Governing Body, and a representative of the sponsor to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy improvement plan was evaluated and other documents and the academy's analysis of data were discussed.

### **Context**

The report on the recent inspection makes clear that, at the time of the inspection, a number of new approaches had been adopted within the academy, but that these had yet to have the impact expected. Since the start of this academy year, these changes have been applied across the academy and given fresh impetus. The

planned extensive changes to the curriculum have been fully implemented. There have been a number of changes to teaching staff, but not in senior leadership.

## **Main findings**

- The principal, senior and middle leaders, and governors are fully aware of the challenge the academy faces to become at least good. They fully recognise the need for the pace of improvement to become more rapid and for the new approaches taken to have a positive impact quickly. Extremely challenging targets and milestones have been set to achieve this as quickly as possible.
- The academy has introduced an extremely rigorous process for setting challenging targets for all students. Frequent and systematic evaluation of students' progress is now being used well to carefully plan the help and support needed by individual and groups of students to enable them to achieve these targets.
- Based on these targets for students, the academy has set extremely challenging, but achievable, targets for the proportions of students achieving and exceeding the expected levels of progress. These targets become more demanding with each subsequent year group.
- Many students enter the academy with low levels of literacy, communication and mathematical skills. The wide range of targeted support for these students is constantly reviewed to evaluate its impact and, where necessary, other approaches used. Following our discussions, more attention is to be given to developing mathematical skills in a range of subjects.
- The sharper focus on raising students' achievement is balanced well with the high-quality support for their personal development and well-being. There is close integration between academic monitoring and pastoral support systems.
- Evaluations of the quality of teaching are now more securely based on the evaluation of individual student's progress and the overall progress made by each teaching group.
- Improvement is underpinned by a whole-academy 'what a good one looks like' approach. This means that: all teachers learn from the best and are clear about what good and better teaching looks like; best practice in subject and senior leadership is exemplified and shared; and students are shown exemplars of what they are expected to achieve and the standard of work they are expected to produce.
- A good system has been introduced to ensure that students receive regular, good quality feedback on their work so that they are clear about how to improve.
- All teachers are expected to follow and implement a set of 'non-negotiables' in their planning and teaching, while allowing enough flexibility for the best teachers to be creative.
- Support and training for teachers is matched well to whole-academy, subject department and individual teacher's needs. The focus is on ensuring that teachers fully understand the principles behind the improvements in teaching required, and are not just equipped with a set of strategies to follow.

- The academy has taken extensive actions to improve students' attendance. This has had some positive impact, but attendance is still not good enough. Further measures have been introduced and the impact of these will be checked carefully. I agreed with the senior leader responsible for attendance for them to identify and let me know of any factors where external support may be required.
- Governors are provided with robust information on students' progress, attendance and the quality of teaching to enable them to ask challenging questions of senior leaders. The governing body has a good balance of skills and expertise and is well-equipped to provide this challenge. They agreed to let me know if they identify any areas where they would value external support.

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

### **External support**

The academy receives support through its E-ACT education advisor. The principal is very outward looking and has formed good working relationships with other schools, local employers, community organisations and national bodies to ensure that the academy benefits from good practice wherever it can be found. Links with partner primary schools are focused well on raising students' skills in literacy and numeracy and smoothing progression from Year 6 to Year 7, including setting much higher expectations.

I agreed with you and the Chair of the Governing Body that where additional or more focused external support is required, you will let me know and I will help to identify schools and/or other partners to provide this.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, E-ACT and the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire and as below.

Yours sincerely

James Sage

**Her Majesty's Inspector**