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Scott Preston
Headteacher
Ernulf Academy
Barford Road
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St Neots
PE19 2SH

Dear Mr Preston

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Ernulf Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 11 October 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body of the academy partnership, and other senior leaders. A telephone conversation was undertaken with a senior representative of the local authority. The academy's statement of action and improvement plan were evaluated. Documents summarising new policies, procedures and actions introduced since the section 5 inspection were also reviewed, as well as reports compiled by independent consultants on the early impact of these initiatives.

Context

A new assistant headteacher has been appointed by the academy partnership. Most of his time is allocated to Ernulf, with subject responsibilities for mathematics and science. A new head of mathematics took up his post following the inspection. A newly qualified teacher for computer science began teaching part-time from

September. Two teachers left the academy at the end of the summer term. There is a new Chair of the Governing Body, which has also been restructured to bring more rigour to the process of holding the academy to account for its performance.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and the governing body of the partnership have fully accepted the section 5 report and are beginning to address the key recommendations for improvement positively and rigorously. The academy's action plans are very detailed and tightly focused on the relevant improvement issues, with clear milestones to show when progress is to be evaluated. The partnership has worked well to share good practice in key improvement areas and to arrange good consultant support to evaluate the early impact of the academy's initiatives.

The role of the governing body in monitoring and evaluating the progress the academy makes against agreed objectives in the action plans has been strengthened effectively. The governing body has contributed well to the process by which issues of underperformance are being addressed, such as by agreeing to the appointment of two experienced teachers of mathematics to lead the subject and keep it more rigorously under review. The planned review of the governing body has not yet taken place, but the Chair is very clear about how rigorous this process should be to ensure that each meeting thoroughly interrogates the academy's performance.

A major focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning is beginning to have a positive impact on securing consistently high expectations about what all groups of students can achieve. However, there is still some way to go to ensure that these initiatives are embedded fully in all lessons and in all year groups. A good programme of staff training includes coaching and the sharing of good teaching and questioning practice across the partnership. It has also begun to address the requirement that subject leaders more consistently and accurately monitor the quality of teaching and achievement in their subjects.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's statement of action and its action plans are fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, 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

Peter Limm
Additional Inspector