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Mr Roy Baylis  
Principal  
Grace Academy Solihull  
Chapelhouse Lane  
Chelmsley Wood  
Birmingham  
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Dear Mr Baylis

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Grace Academy Solihull**

Following my visit to your school on 25 November 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 school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal and Vice-Principal, the Chair of the Governing Body and three directors from the sponsor. Meetings were also held with five students from Years 11, 12 and 13 and with four Assistant Principals who have responsibility for the newly formed 'schools' (Tyndale, Newton, Wilberforce and Livingstone) which incorporate the subject departments and the support for students' welfare. Visits were made to four Year 10 mathematics lessons to observe students' learning and to look at the work in their books. The sponsor's statement of action was evaluated. This single plan incorporates the academy's amended improvement plan. The academy's single central register, which contains checks on the appointment of staff, was reviewed.

## **Context**

There have been no significant changes in staffing since the last inspection. However, a significant number of staff, teaching, operational and support, left the school at the end of the summer term 2013. Changes were also made to the leadership structure, the academy moving from five colleges to four 'schools' with new leaders appointed as heads of school at Assistant Principal level.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

The Principal, governing body and sponsor fully accept the findings of the section 5 inspection and are addressing the issues for improvement. Academy leaders are taking appropriate action to improve the quality of teaching and learning and increase the rate of students' progress. Existing good practice within the academy has been shared more widely and extensive training, including coaching, has been provided and supported by the sponsor. The Principal has made appropriate use of human resource procedures for dealing with underperforming staff and expectations have been strongly reinforced. Academy leaders now make staff feel far more accountable for the progress students make in lessons.

The quality of the information the academy has about students' achievements has improved significantly; academy leaders now have timely and valuable insight into the progress of individuals and groups in each year group across the academy. This shows that students' progress is improving, particularly in mathematics. This information is used well at all leadership levels, and increasingly effectively by classroom teachers. However, data seen during the inspection indicates that student progress in mathematics is still below national figures. A wide range of catch-up opportunities for Year 11 is in place, designed to address weaknesses and gaps in their previous learning. Senior leaders have rightly recognised the need to extend its provision for literacy and plans have been adjusted to ensure that students' reading, speaking and writing skills are being developed by all staff. Work is continuing on ensuring that marking is more helpful to students. However, the scrutiny of students' work in Year 10 indicates that this is at an early stage.

The sponsor has provided strongly focused support for the academy. This backing has included human resources advice and guidance, and financial support, to attract and appoint a teacher of mathematics qualified to lead developments in learning and teaching. The governing body is developing its role and is determined to ensure the academy makes progress. It is becoming much more aware of its role in school improvement. However, the external review of governance has not yet been undertaken. This should be done as a matter of urgency.

All staff new to the academy have been checked as required, and are trained appropriately to keep students safe and free from harm.

Much remains to be done and, since the inspection, academy leaders at all levels, aided by the sponsor and governors, have begun to take appropriate action. The sponsor's statement of action, which incorporates the academy's amended improvement plan and other documents such as the academy's monitoring schedule, is fit for purpose. It is a practical document that leaders and members of the governing body can use to evaluate the impact of their actions.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The sponsor's statement of action, which incorporates the academy's improvement plan, is fit for purpose.

The following refinements were recommended.

- Include, in more detail, the steps to be taken for some actions, detailing how the impact on student progress will be monitored and communicated and which individual academy leader will be accountable.
- Include specific student progress and attainment data in order to provide clear success criteria that can be measured and evaluated against interim milestones.
- Ensure the dates and timescales for longer-term actions, such as improving the quality of teaching to raise students' achievement, are clear and unambiguous.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the academy sponsor, the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisers Unit at the DfE. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**