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30 January 2014

Mr T Ashley
The Headteacher
Willenhall E-ACT Academy
Furzebank Way
Willenhall
Walsall
WV12 4BD

Dear Mr Ashley

Special measures monitoring inspection of Willenhall E-ACT Academy

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, Acting Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders responsible for teaching and a representative from the sponsoring academy chain. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection the Chair of the Governing Body has resigned and been replaced, on an interim basis, by the Vice-Chair until a replacement can be found. There have been no changes in staffing to date. However, five staff are leaving at the end of the year, including two members of the senior leadership team. E-ACT, the academy sponsors, are working with the Principal to provide temporary replacements to cover the leadership vacancies.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The Principal, who joined the academy just before the inspection, has made good use of the inspection outcomes to set out a clear strategy for improvement. A new leadership structure is planned and will be put into place during the spring term. Current actions have been focused on improving teaching and developing a curriculum that meets the future needs of students.

Governors have quickly responded to the issues identified in the report. They are currently undergoing an external review and have restructured their committees to align with the academy's priorities. They are working closely with E-ACT to find additional governors to strengthen the skills of the current governing body and have undertaken additional training on the use of data.

The sponsor's statement of action and the academy improvement plan use the same format, with closely aligned priorities. Success criteria for the plans are broken into small steps, with clear milestones that make it easy for governors to track and monitor the progress of improvement actions. It is also clear in the plans how each activity will be monitored and evaluated. Currently, the plans have no actions for the next academic year so it is unclear how priorities will develop over this timescale.

The E-ACT education adviser has taken rapid action to secure additional support for the academy and a senior leader has been seconded from a local outstanding academy, two days a week, to support senior leaders in delivering improvements in teaching and learning. As a result, improving teaching has been given a high focus; a new marking policy is in place, all teachers are undergoing regular training and are now part of small coaching groups. However, the impact of the work has not yet been evaluated. In addition, identified staff are due to begin intensive improving teaching programmes next term, arranged through external providers. Planned actions to eliminate inadequate teaching are appropriate but lack the urgency required to ensure that students do not experience poor teaching by the end of the year.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

PROTECT-INSPECTION



Yours sincerely

Deborah James
Her Majesty's Inspector