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Antony Pinnock
Wreake Valley Academy
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Dear Mr Pinnock

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Wreake Valley Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 22–23 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in April 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

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

Yours sincerely

David Rzeznik
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - removing the wide variations that currently exist in the quality of teaching
 - sharing more effectively the good practice that is already in the academy
 - planning work that is more closely matched to the ability of all students
 - making sure that teachers' marking consistently shows students how to improve their work, and by giving students the chance to respond to this marking
 - making sure that teachers regularly check in lessons that students understand the work, and then adapt their teaching if necessary.

- Raise students' achievement so that they reach at least national-average standards in all subjects by:
 - making sure that all groups of students make consistently good progress, especially boys, students who are eligible for the pupil premium, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs
 - setting ambitious targets for what each student can achieve and making sure that students know what they have to do to reach these targets
 - improving students' numeracy skills by planning how they can use and apply these skills in different subjects.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure the academy's plans for improvement contain clear measures of success so that governors and senior leaders can check that these plans are working
 - further developing the role of teachers who are in charge of subjects so they lead improvements in teaching, and they check more effectively the quality of teaching and students' achievement in their subject.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22–23 January 2014

Evidence

The inspection concentrated on evaluating the extent of improvement in addressing the areas for improvement identified by inspectors in April 2013.

The inspector met with the Principal, Assistant Principals, subject leaders for English, mathematics and science, Chair of the Governing Body and Chair of the teaching and achievement committee, and the person responsible for maintaining the single central register.

The inspector observed six lessons in all key stages. All of the lessons were conducted with senior leaders. Detailed feedback was given by leaders on all of the lessons seen in order that teachers knew the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching. The inspector observed the feedback given to teachers to ensure that it was fair, accurate and developmental. A sample of English, mathematics and science work was scrutinised, from each key stage, to check if marking identifies what must be improved. A range of documentation was evaluated, including the academy's attainment and progress information, governing body meeting minutes, monitoring and evaluation records, and reports of visits conducted by external consultants. The views of students were sought informally.

Context

Eleven teachers and seven support staff have left the school since the first monitoring visit in May 2013. They have been replaced by five teachers and eight support staff. Three new governors were appointed during the autumn term 2013.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders and governors are ambitious and their work is well organised. There is a relentless focus on rectifying the most important weaknesses in the academy. There is now a culture of high expectations and all leaders, teachers and governors are working in partnership to improve academy outcomes quickly.

The improvement plan is of good quality. Priorities, actions and the measures used to judge success are clear. Rigorous checks are made, every six weeks, to see whether or not targets have been met. There is a successful drive to improve teaching, students' progress, and the leadership skills, particularly of English, mathematics, science and sixth form leaders. The reorganisation of the senior leadership team, in May 2013, significantly improved their effectiveness. For example, Assistant Principals are working closely with science and mathematics leaders to improve teachers' subject and curriculum knowledge, and to ensure that

teachers plan work that is challenging and motivates students to learn effectively. Subject leaders are suitably checking if policies and procedures are properly implemented. For example, reviews of marking are pinpointing strengths and weaknesses in the feedback given to students. Appropriate action is taken to further improve marking practice.

Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are good. Consequently, senior and subject leaders know what is working well and what must be improved. Weaknesses are addressed in a coherent and systematic manner. For example, those whose teaching requires significant improvement get bespoke training, and support in the classroom, to improve their teaching skills. Weak teachers are given an individual support plan to quickly rectify their specific problems. The inspector observed teachers who had received such support and guidance, and shortcomings in teaching practice are being suitably remedied.

Subject leaders in departments that are underperforming, receive coaching from senior leaders plus external support to raise standards, and to improve teaching and their leadership skills. The strategy to share responsibilities and leadership duties across a wider range of teachers in English, mathematics and science has had a two-fold effect. Firstly, heads of these subject departments have had their workload reduced, enabling them to concentrate on strategic matters rather than day-to-day management tasks. Secondly, teachers are leading improvements. They are more involved in the checking of teaching quality than in the past, resulting in more shared responsibility for students' achievement. Teachers are appropriately developing their own leadership skills, which is building leadership capacity within the academy. Good practice is shared widely to improve teaching and leadership quality. For example, good teachers help weaker teachers to improve. Effective leaders support less effective ones to bring about the necessary improvements in their subject departments. Leaders have started to update schemes of work to ensure that numeracy skills are developed in subjects other than mathematics. This work is in its infancy and the impact of initiatives is not yet known.

Governors are well organised and are doing a good job. They are effectively holding senior leaders to account for the academy's performance. They have restructured their working practices to increase their efficiency and their oversight of the academy's work. Governors are conducting regular reviews, with senior leaders, to judge the extent of progress in addressing the priorities identified in the improvement plan. Governors have implemented a recommendation made in May 2013 to ensure an independent educational perspective is provided, at reviews, to quality assure proceedings. Governing body minutes show that governors challenge and question senior leaders well, to ensure self-evaluation is fair and accurate.

In May 2013, the single central register did not always specify the date and person undertaking the checks on staff qualifications and their right to work in the United Kingdom. The academy was not robust enough in ensuring, as required, that supply agencies verified that they had undertaken criminal record checks on foreign

nationals. Single central register weaknesses have now been rectified. The date and person undertaking the required checks are always specified. Supply agencies are providing the necessary information to verify that all checks, including criminal record checks on foreign nationals, are carried out.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Teaching and learning are improving in English, mathematics and science, and in the sixth form. Wide variations in learning are gradually reducing. This is because inadequate teaching has been largely eliminated and there is more good teaching than in April 2013. All groups of students, in all key stages, are making better progress because they are taught more effectively. More challenging activities, and targeted support to accelerate learning, are also resulting in an increased number of students making good or better progress in English, mathematics and science and some sixth form subjects.
- In 2013, the progress made by A-level students in applied business, applied science, economics, geography, history and media studies was good. Good or better progress was maintained in health and social care, sociology, psychology and travel and tourism subjects. The progress made by AS-level students was good in psychology, sociology and media studies.
- In the lessons observed, the work was mostly matched to students' capabilities. Teachers regularly checked students' understanding of the work and adapted their teaching so that lesson objectives were met. There was appropriate questioning to consolidate and extend learning.
- Students' behaviour in lessons was good and they were engaged and motivated by most of the activities provided. They behaved well and were ready and eager to learn. Students and teachers are properly prepared for each lesson.
- There is a positive ethos in, and around, the academy. Students get on well with their teachers and with each other.
- Marking has improved. It is identifying what is working well and what must be improved. Teachers expect students to follow the advice they give them in their comments, and there is evidence, particularly in English books, of students assessing their own work.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The tracking of students' progress, from their different starting points, to determine their progress in English, mathematics and science each academic year, and over time, is not sharp enough. A large number of students join the academy in Year 10. The progress made by them in Years 10 and 11 is not

properly evaluated. The progress made by these students is not being compared to the progress made by those students who have been in the academy since Year 7. National guidance is not being used to evaluate the progress made by students who are working below National Curriculum Level 1.

- Students are not making consistently good progress in English, mathematics, science and in some sixth form subjects. For example, Year 9 students' progress in mathematics is inconsistent and too many students have made adequate rather than good progress since September 2013. Last academic year, A-level students' progress in computing and music was too slow. Students taking AS mathematics last year did not achieve as well as they could in the subject.
- Senior leaders, subject leaders and governors do not currently have a clear picture of the proportion of teaching in English, mathematics and science that is inadequate or requires improvement, or is good or outstanding.
- The targets set for some students in Key Stages 3 and 4 are insufficiently ambitious. For example, GCSE targets for those students who are of lower ability are too low. Feedback in books does not always make sufficiently explicit what individuals must do to reach the targets set.
- The presentation of work in books is too inconsistent. Spelling and punctuation errors are not being systematically rectified. The spelling policy is not being properly implemented. Too many students are not writing in a fluent joined style.
- Persistent absence is too high. It is well above the national average and is not reducing quickly enough. Non-attendance is slowing individuals' progress.

External support

The academy commissions its own support to drive improvement. It has benefited greatly from the links established with a local outstanding school. Subject leaders for science and mathematics have worked with senior leaders in the outstanding school to improve schemes of work and the teaching methods used in English and mathematics. Senior leaders have learned how to coach teachers effectively and how to share best practice more widely across all subject departments. Governors have attended various courses to increase their knowledge, understanding and skills to ensure better governance, and what must be done to move the quality of education to good. External reviews of teaching and learning, in English and mathematics, have been useful in clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and leadership in these subject departments, and what must be done to bring about further improvement.