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3 April 2014

Mr Stuart McLaughlin
The Headteacher
The Brittons Academy Trust
Ford Lane
Rainham
RM13 7BB

Dear Mr McLaughlin

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The Brittons Academy Trust

Following my visit to your school on 3 April 2014, 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 school was judged to have serious weaknesses in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and the Vice-Principal, the Chair of the Governing Body and the principal inspector from the local authority. You took me on a short tour of the academy. I evaluated the academy's statement of action and the post-Ofsted action plan.

Context

Since the inspection, there have been no changes of staff. However, seven teachers will be leaving by the end of the school year in August 2014. A full restructuring of the staff has taken place and the new organisational structure will become effective in September 2014. The new structure includes four assistant Principals, each leading a 'school' consisting of groups of subjects and a named 'house'. Each assistant Principal will be responsible for line managing key appointees with specific

duties for a subject, for learning, support and guidance and leading a tutor team. The new structure will have a range of cross-house internal and external support services working with students.

The academy is working closely with two partner schools, judged as 'good' at their last inspection: Redden Court School and Coopers School. The academy is also working with an Advanced Skills Teacher/consultant from the University of Brighton on a mathematics project

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You have made good use of your prior knowledge of the academy's work to identify key actions that are required to bring about far-reaching sustainable improvements. Your long term plan is to ensure that the academy can achieve 'good' at the next inspection. The action plan dovetails well with the post-Ofsted action plan. Actions for improvement are clearly targeted at developing teaching. The plan includes clear targets and milestones to measure the impact of actions taken. You are using a good range of programmes that include, for example, coaching, mentoring, opportunities to observe good practice in the two partner schools, voluntary and compulsory training, and peer-to-peer, to develop teaching. Already, the updated action plan indicates that the academy is on course to meet the targets for improving teaching.

My discussions with your colleagues indicate that you have successfully steered staff in accepting the changes. This is linked to the strategic use of information on students' progress to help staff recognise what students can achieve well. Planning for improvement is closely connected to setting challenging targets for teachers and the development of middle leaders. Accountability for students' achievement has increased primarily as new systems have been introduced. For example, roles and responsibilities have been defined as part of the re-structuring; line management is fully in place; teachers are provided with half-termly information on students' rates of progress and you have also developed a new approach to monitoring and identifying students' progress. You mentioned that the teaching and learning communities referred to in the inspection report are being established. Issues around equality of access to support and outcomes are also considered and there is increased monitoring of teaching. Middle leaders reportedly have the opportunity to extend their experience by joining the senior leadership team and working on identified projects. This partial list of actions shows the speed at which change has been introduced.

You have also made important changes to looking at the needs of different groups. For instance, work on nurturing students identified as gifted and talented students has started and parents are involved. Groups of students with additional learning needs and those eligible for additional funding are also being assisted. Resources are being used creatively to help students catch up. You indicated that students are

responding well and referred to a few case studies to demonstrate improvement in outcomes. The effectiveness of all activities needs to be evaluated to identify the full impact.

Governors recognised the need for a more direct approach to working with you and your staff and now know what they need to do to provide challenge and support. The governing body's action plan is interconnected to the academy's improvement plan with clear key performance indicators. These are designed to ensure that governors are more robust in holding you and other leaders to account. The next step is to ensure that the governors' review takes place and findings are aligned to their action plan.

You and your staff are working very closely in partnership with the local authority. All parties recognise that there is a good level of openness and engagement with local officers. As a result, the local authority has identified an appropriate range of support including forming a monitoring board that is designed to provide challenge and analysis of changes introduced. Support will also include quality assuring work undertaken and providing specialist for subject leaders as required.

The school's improvement action plan is fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector