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2 May 2014

Ms Elaine Maher
Principal
Reedwood E-ACT Academy
Bentley Drive
Walsall
WS2 8RX

Dear Ms Maher

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Reedwood E-ACT Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 2 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a sponsor representative to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy post Ofsted action plan was evaluated. Samples of pupils' work, performance tracking data and examples of leaders' management of teachers' performance were also taken into consideration.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the academy's staffing or status since the section 5 inspection, which judged the academy to require improvement.

Main findings

You have quickly overcome your initial disappointment with the inspection outcome and lost no time in establishing the energy, commitment and determination to bring about the necessary improvements. You have seized the opportunity to identify staff who are capable of additional responsibility and provided the necessary training and support to help them succeed in management roles. Together with your leadership team, you have provided clear direction and communicated well-defined expectations of managers, staff, pupils, governors and parents to plan and implement the required changes. You have taken advice from sponsor representatives and commissioned consultants to ensure the planned actions meet identified priorities. You have taken advantage of available training and support so that people at all levels are appropriately strengthened.

Staff from Years 4, 5 and 6 have received training in mathematics to help identify any weaknesses in teaching, learning and ways of working. Changes have been identified, implemented and reviewed to further refine practice. There are plans to share successful strategies with other teachers in the near future. Teachers have received training in better ways of marking pupils' work. Examples in pupils' books show that teachers' feedback is increasingly specific and explains how pupils can improve. Time is now provided for pupils to respond to teachers' feedback and pupils are showing an increased ability to implement improvements.

You have introduced a programme of formal and informal lesson observations with a clear focus on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders and managers are now able to intervene quickly and give immediate feedback. In return, staff show a keen and committed desire to improve and take on advice. Assessments of pupils' progress are now undertaken every six weeks. They are checked to ensure accuracy. Leaders and staff meet regularly to review the assessments and discuss pupils' progress. These meetings enable you and others to consider reasons for slow or successful progress; review the necessary support; trial new ideas; and closely monitor the pupils' success. Your records indicate improved outcomes for pupils and accelerated rates of progress. You also report that learning support assistants are better informed and can adapt their support more readily to meet pupils' changing needs. You have successfully linked decisions on teachers' pay awards with the progress pupils make and the standards they attain. Your decisions and judgements are also informed by a suitable range of evidence to be collected and checked over time. You have set clear, ambitious but manageable targets for teachers to work towards.

The governing body has undergone considerable change in the last year. Governance has been reviewed at the sponsor's request so that strengths and priorities for development could be identified. A data manager was commissioned by the sponsor to train senior leaders and governors to better understand and analyse published performance data. The Chair of the Governing Body is suitably

experienced and ambitious for the academy's success. His expectations of governors are appropriate and display no hint of complacency.

You have prepared a post Ofsted action plan which includes all areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Planned actions, those who are responsible for leading them and the timescales are clearly identified. Some of the planned actions initially lacked clarity about how they would be achieved. These aspects were sharpened successfully during the visit.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

E-ACT has provided a range of coaching and mentoring events for leaders, governors, managers and staff. The education advisor representing E-ACT visits the academy every half term to provide ongoing support and to monitor and report on the academy's progress in achieving rapid improvements. E-ACT has brokered further support from a local teaching school to advise and demonstrate examples of outstanding teaching. Together with consultants commissioned by the academy, the targeted support is helping the academy improve with sufficient and focused urgency.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Walsall.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway
Her Majesty's Inspector