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17 December 2014

Mrs Kerry Lilico
Headteacher
Grasmere Academy
Grasmere Court
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE12 6TS

Dear Mrs Lilico

**Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Grasmere Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 16 December 2014 with Belita Scott, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 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 2014. 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 and the Head of Children, Young People and Learning for North Tyneside.

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2014

- Urgently improve teaching and learning to be consistently good or better, in order to rapidly accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment, by:
  - improving teachers' assessments of pupils' learning so that they always provide the right level of work for new learning to take place
  - ensuring that pupils are given regular opportunities to make corrections and improve their work
  - regularly monitoring these aspects so that the emerging good practice is captured and shared for the benefit of all pupils.

- Urgently improve pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics by:
  - conducting rigorous assessments of what pupils in all classes know and can do to discover where there are gaps in their learning which are preventing good progress
  - devising a programme to rapidly improve pupils' knowledge of number from the Nursery class to Year 6
  - developing teachers' mathematical subject knowledge and their knowledge of what pupils are expected to know in each age group, so that they can plan work that steadily develops pupils' skills and understanding
  - monitoring teachers' planning to ensure that it always provides a good level of challenge for all pupils in the class.

- Urgently improve pupils' progress and attainment in reading by:
  - conducting a rigorous review of the recently introduced phonics programme (which teaches letters and the sounds they make) to discover what is working well and what needs to be improved
  - providing further training for staff so that there is greater consistency in their expectations of the progress pupils will make
  - providing appropriate resources for staff so that they can accelerate and consolidate pupils' learning more effectively
  - accurately assessing the reading skills of older pupils to discover where there are weaknesses in their reading and spelling
  - providing comprehensive teaching and support to ensure that identified pupils are robustly supported to reach the level expected for their age in reading.

- Improve leadership and management, and thereby accelerate the academy's progress to good by:
  - providing training and support for recently appointed middle leaders to ensure they are able to carry out their responsibilities effectively
  - establishing regular checks on the effectiveness of teaching and learning so that all leaders play a full part in identifying weaknesses in the academy, and develop the skills to produce appropriate plans for improvement
  - providing sufficient time for middle leaders to carry out their role

ensuring appropriate support and consequences are consistently implemented for the small minority of pupils whose behaviour occasionally does not match the good behaviour of the large majority.

**Report on the second monitoring inspection on 16 December 2014**

## Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) met with the headteacher, a range of staff, including those responsible for literacy and numeracy across the academy, a group of governors, including the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the North Tyneside Academy Trust and a representative of the local authority. HMI also visited a range of lessons and scrutinised pupils' workbooks. He also scrutinised a range of documents, including the academy's development plans and its records of the quality of teaching.

## Context

Since the last inspection the interim headteacher has been appointed as the permanent headteacher of the academy.

## The quality of leadership and management at the school

- The headteacher continues to have a clear understanding of the weaknesses at the academy and is driving improvement. There are now rigorous monitoring systems in place to help measure the impact of teaching on learning. These are having a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment, particularly in the early years and Year 6. Leaders at the academy continue to develop teachers' knowledge and skills through training and support that focuses carefully on what pupils need to do to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. However, more needs to be done to ensure that all teaching across the academy ensures that all children make better progress.
- The headteacher, working with the governing body, has ensured that individual teachers' performance targets are more precise because they are linked directly to improving children's progress.
- Working with Fordley Primary, an outstanding local school, the local authority and the North Tyneside Academy Foundation, leaders at the academy continue to strengthen the reliability of teachers' judgements about pupils' progress and attainment. The academy is also working with these partners to develop and extend the curriculum that the academy offers its pupils.
- Leaders have continued to improve behaviour across the academy. There is now an increasing emphasis on pupils taking responsibility for their behaviour. However, this needs to be further developed so that pupils are more able to extend this responsibility to their own learning.
- Middle leaders are not having the impact that they should have on raising standards across the academy. More needs to be done to ensure that these key leaders implement clear actions to make improvements in their areas of responsibility and then be able to track whether these are proving to be effective.

- The governing body continues to display high levels of informed challenge and is holding staff to account for their work effectively. The introduction of subject working groups made up of governors, teachers and teaching assistants is making a positive contribution to tackling the weaknesses at the academy. However, the role of teaching assistants in these groups is not well-enough defined and this is limiting their contribution.

**Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The work of early years is a real strength at the academy. Staff are led well and work well together. Expectations of what children can do are high, so they respond very positively to the carefully planned activities that they experience.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving and the academy is working effectively to close the 'gaps' in pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills identified in the April 2014 inspection.
- Attendance is improving and is close to the national average.
- Data are used well to identify 'gaps' in pupils' learning and teachers are increasingly able to use data to have informed conversations about individual pupils so that better provision can be made to meet their needs.
- Pupils in Year 6 are now making quicker progress from their starting points.
- The academy is using an increasingly effective range of strategies to engage with parents so that pupils make better progress. This is particularly the case in the early years. However, parents with children in all years at the academy report that they welcome the academy's engagement with them.

**Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Although the performance of teaching assistants is beginning to be managed more carefully, their roles are underdeveloped. More needs to be done to ensure that teaching assistants are clear about their roles in planning and undertaking activities in the classroom that help pupils improve. They also need to play a fuller role in assessing the impact of their work.
- Although detailed marking and feedback are much more evident in the work books scrutinised, more needs to be done to ensure that teachers' comments are more precise in what they expect pupils to do next to improve.
- Presentation and, in particular, handwriting was poor in too many of the work books seen. More needs to be done to ensure that pupils take greater pride in their work and show this in how it is presented in their books.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' spelling is not helping them to improve the accuracy of their writing. More needs to be done to develop an academy-wide approach to the marking and teaching of spelling so that pupils make much better gains than they do currently.

## External support

The local authority is providing effective support to help improve teaching and leadership in the academy. It is working particularly well in helping validate the quality of teachers' assessments of pupils' work. The academy is also receiving effective support from the North Tyneside Academy Foundation and Fordley Primary School in developing the academy's curriculum. In addition, the headteacher is receiving effective and focused leadership support from Greenfields Community Primary school, a local good school.