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Mr Keith Binks  
Headteacher  
Sir Thomas Wharton Community College A Co-operative Academy  
Tait Avenue  
Doncaster  
South Yorkshire  
DN12 1HH

Dear Mr Binks

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Sir Thomas Wharton Community College A Co-operative Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 21 April 2015, 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 academy's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in January 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors and representatives from other schools that are providing support. The statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated. Information on the academy's website, the single central record and other documents relating to the academy's self-evaluation were scrutinised.

#### **Context**

The headteacher has recently realigned the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders. One teacher has left and three others will leave the academy this term. An external consultant has recently joined the senior leadership team on a temporary basis for the summer term.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

The headteacher has worked with senior leaders to prepare an improvement plan following the last inspection of the school in January 2015. The plan has a number of weaknesses which need to be addressed. The plan does not set out sufficiently clearly the actions leaders will take over time to initiate, sustain and embed the necessary improvements. In addition, the plan does not reference the actions that external support partners will take or the role of governors in evaluating progress. Thirdly, following the realignment of senior leadership responsibilities, it is no longer clear who is accountable for each area of the plan.

Since the inspection, there has been insufficient training for members of staff to address the most pressing weaknesses in teaching. This is because senior leaders have not created time for this to happen, despite knowing there is far too much weak teaching. Some work has taken place to improve the quality of marking and feedback to students, but work to ensure assessments are accurate and that teachers' lesson planning meets the needs of different abilities has not happened. Senior leaders now need to quicken the pace of improvement, raise expectations and set out clearly what they expect of all teachers.

The headteacher and members of the governing body have recognised the need to draw upon external support and have established a partnership with Hungerhill School, a local academy. A wide-ranging package of support has been agreed and meetings are taking place to agree the specific foci for this work. External partners have already supported senior leaders in the academy to review the quality of teaching and establish an accurate baseline of strengths and weaknesses. Procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning were weak in the past, but are now developing. Leaders have begun to take more account of work in students' books and of data on the progress students make when arriving at judgements. However, the judgements of some middle and senior leaders are not accurate and the feedback they provide to teachers is ineffective. To address this, the academy has commissioned an external consultant to work with leaders during the summer term to develop their skills.

The outcomes of public examinations in 2014 were much lower than anticipated. Consequently, some work has gone on to check the accuracy of assessments. Leaders recognise assessments in some subjects are not yet reliable and accurate. Consequently, the academy's predictions for 2015 may not be secure. Currently, the academy is predicting a rise in attainment in 2015 and a further modest rise in 2016. However, these improvements would not be enough to reach the national average, because too few students are forecast to make expected or good progress in a number of subjects, including English and mathematics. Current tracking data also suggest that the gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students may narrow in 2015, but widen again in 2016.

Leaders and governors recognise students have not made the progress they should in Years 7, 8 and 9 in the past. In order to develop reading, writing and mathematical skills more rapidly, the academy will adopt a new timetable from September 2015 that will create more time for the teaching of English and mathematics in Key Stage 3.

The external review of governance has been completed. The review highlighted the need for governors to develop stronger procedures for evaluating the academy's progress. Governors intend to strengthen the role of the Strategic Planning Group in checking on the implementation and impact of the academy's improvement plan. The group will meet more frequently and will place more emphasis on scrutinising the progress of different groups of students in each key stage. Governors have also completed a review of the academy's use of additional funding to support disadvantage students. This has shown funding has not been used well enough and its impact remains inconsistent. Further work needs to be done to ensure better additional support is provided for disadvantaged students, particularly in English and mathematics.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The proprietor'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 Interim Director Children and Young People's Service for Doncaster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**