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29 April 2015

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 28 April 2015 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 third 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 Director of Children's Services 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 school, 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 third monitoring inspection on 28 April 2015**

### **Evidence**

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) met with the headteacher, a range of staff, including those responsible for literacy and early years in the academy, two groups of pupils, a group of governors, including the 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. They also scrutinised a range of documents, including the academy's development plans and its records of the quality of teaching.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection there have been some changes to staffing in Key Stage 2 and to the senior leadership team's membership.

### **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. However, because of the recent changes to staffing in Key Stage 2, leaders need to be more detailed and focused in their monitoring. This will help ensure that all pupils in this key stage make the progress that they should.
- The headteacher and governors have responded effectively to very recent changes in leadership at middle and senior levels. However, they need to move swiftly to implement their plans so that there is strong leadership in mathematics across the academy. In addition, they should ensure that leaders have sufficient time and support to undertake their roles in monitoring the quality of teaching and implementing strategies to improve learning.
- Leaders at the academy continue to drive improvements in teachers' knowledge and skills through training and support that focuses carefully on what pupils need to do to improve. However, leaders need to do more to ensure that all teaching across the academy is good or better. There is still inconsistency in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders, including governors, have worked promptly and effectively to develop further the roles of teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are now more responsible for the quality of their work in supporting learning and are more carefully trained. This is beginning to make a positive contribution to the quality pupils' work.
- 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. This is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Leaders continue to improve behaviour across the school. However, inspectors saw examples of low level disruption where pupils were unduly restless and distracted each other. This type of behaviour hampers pupils'

opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and deepen their understanding.

- Governors continue to have a very clear understanding of the weaknesses at the academy and how academy leaders are addressing them. They know the academy well and are holding leaders to account for their work.

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

- The early years provision continues to be a real strength at the academy. Staff are well led and work effectively together. Expectations of what children can do are high. As a result they respond very positively to the carefully planned activities that they experience.
- Attendance continues to improve. The academy has put in place rigorous and imaginative strategies to address persistent absentees. These are beginning to bear fruit.
- Data continue to be used well to identify pupils' strengths and learning needs. Teachers and, increasingly, teaching assistants are using data to focus their teaching so that pupils' learning improves.
- The academy's work with pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is growing in effectiveness. The academy has high expectations and the work of these pupils is monitored frequently to ensure that they make the progress that they should.
- The presentation of pupils' work in the books seen is improving. Pupils are increasingly taking pride in their work. Although there is more to be done, the positive way in which the academy has addressed this issue is encouraging.

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

- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to undertake practical and investigative work in mathematics. The academy is beginning to tackle this issue, but more needs to be done urgently so that all pupils receive a full and challenging diet of mathematics.
- Although detailed marking and feedback continue to be more evident in the work books scrutinised, it is not having a full enough impact on pupils' learning. More needs to be done to ensure that teachers' comments are precise so that pupils know clearly what they need to do next to improve. The academy should review its marking and assessment policy so that it complements and supports learning.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' spelling is still not good enough. 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 continues to provide effective support to help improve teaching and leadership in the academy. It continues to work 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.