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20 November 2015

Miss Melanie Wicks  
Headteacher  
Wellacre Technology Academy  
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Dear Miss Wicks

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wellacre Technology Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 5 November 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with yourself and other senior leaders as well as a representative of the local authority. Discussions were held with the subject leaders for modern foreign languages, history and geography to determine the extent to which they were managing and improving their areas of responsibility. In addition, I also talked to two groups of boys from Years 9 and 11. A meeting was also held with the Chair and vice-chair of the governing body.

A range of documentation, which you provided, including your post-Ofsted action plan and monitoring information, were also evaluated. In addition, a learning walk with you focused on the learning environment, especially in the English, humanities

and modern foreign language classes. We also looked at the behaviour and engagement of pupils in lessons. A small sample of pupils' work was also evaluated.

Since the school sixth form is very small, this monitoring inspection focused primarily on provision at Key Stage 3 and 4.

## **Context**

There have been some significant staffing changes since the inspection in May. New management appointments have been made, notably in science, mathematics and geography as well as in the pastoral areas. The number of newly qualified teachers is much reduced with only two on the staff at present. There has been a significant restructuring of the curriculum being taught at Key Stage 3 and an increasing emphasis on more academic options at GCSE. Several new governors have also been appointed.

## **Main findings**

Since the inspection, there has been an improvement in the school's overall examination results. The percentage of pupils attaining 5 A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, increased from 42% to 54%. Attainment and progress in English was especially pleasing with 74% of pupils attaining an A\* to C grade and 77% made at least expected progress. This is now above the national average. The school has completed an extensive analysis of its assessment information and is fully aware that despite the headline improvement, several issues remain to be tackled. There has been a significant dip in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and weaknesses remain in the performance of some subjects, notably science, history, geography and modern foreign languages.

There is a new, clear and shared vision for the school. Pupils commented that they are aware of this as it is clearly on display around corridors and in classrooms. The school is undergoing a rapid process of change which has coincided with significant staffing changes. Pupils interviewed were very positive about the changes taking place. In particular, they noted that behaviour around the school was much improved, that punctuality to lessons was more rigorously challenged and that there was less disruption in lessons. They felt that the zero-tolerance of poor behaviour was having a positive impact. They identified that, generally, staff were providing more frequent and detailed marking and feedback on their work and in some subjects, notably mathematics and English, they had good opportunities to redraft responses and correct mistakes. However, this is not yet consistent across all subjects. They also highlighted that not all work is challenging, an issue we also identified during our learning walk. Year 11 pupils interviewed were aspirational and almost all had clear plans about future career pathways, whether this involved further study or through apprenticeship.

A detailed action plan addressing the areas of weakness identified during the inspection has been put into place and reflects the changing culture of the school. Self evaluation is accurate and school leaders know the school well and are aware of what needs to be improved. Monitoring systems are much more rigorous and there is very detailed analysis of assessment information which is making it easier to identify underachievement and provide more focused support. Middle leaders are being actively encouraged to take greater responsibility for the management and development of their subject areas. In some areas, such as English, there has been an obvious improvement. However, in the less successful subject areas there is too much emphasis on exam processes, improving marking and assessment procedures and there is still insufficient focus on tackling weaknesses in teaching and learning. These middle leaders are not always making use of the best resources or accessing the best advice to start to improve the quality of teaching and learning, engagement or challenge in lessons. New systems have been established and are being embedded more strongly and effectively in some areas than others. Although improvements are clearly evident, there remains too much inconsistency between subjects and between individual teachers. As a result, the impact on pupil outcomes is not yet becoming evident across all subject areas.

Governance has undergone a period of transition which was started just prior to the inspection in May. Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Several are new to post and there is now a much better balance of relevant skills and experiences. Governors are very clear about their role and there is recent emerging evidence to show that they are now challenging school leaders more effectively and are more active and visible around the school. They are also requesting more accountability from subject leaders than previously. There is a strong focus on training and governors regularly attend up-dates and training sessions provided by the local authority.

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

### **External support**

The school accesses a wide range of support from a number of providers including within its own school network as well as from the local authority. Local authority subject networks are also being accessed more regularly. Impact of the latest support remains variable and has not yet improved the weakest curriculum areas. An external review of governance is currently in the process of being completed.

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

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**