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Mrs A Sweeten
Acting Associate Executive Principal
Outwood Grange Academies Trust
Redcar Academy
Kirkleatham Lane
Redcar
Cleveland
TS10 4AB

Dear Mrs Sweeten

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Redcar Academy – A Community School for the Performing and Visual Arts

Following my visit to your academy on 26 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 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 June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the academy was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and directors of the trust are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good academy.

In addition to addressing the areas for improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection, the academy leaders and trust directors must ensure that all staff personal records are completed in line with the academy's policies as soon as possible.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, acting associate executive principal, the acting headteacher and other senior leaders from Redcar Academy and Outwood Grange Academy Trust (OGAT). I met with three directors of the Redcar Academy Trust, including the Chair of Directors, the Regional Chief Executive Officer, OGAT (North) and briefly with the Chief Executive of OGAT. All the discussions focused on the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I reviewed the safeguarding policy and the single central record. I considered the information gathered by OGAT about the academy in September 2015 and since the start of the contractual arrangement from 16 November 2015.

I made joint visits to lessons with you and Redcar Academy leaders. When in classrooms, I looked at pupils' books and talked with them about changes in the academy since September and more recently. I met with Redcar Academy staff responsible for monitoring pupils' attendance, alongside the senior educational welfare officer from OGAT. I talked with pupils at breaktime and in a formal meeting at lunchtime.

Context

Since the last inspection, the directors of the academy have taken action to secure a contract with OGAT to provide leadership capacity. Both parties are working towards a formal relationship, with OGAT sponsoring Redcar Academy Trust.

There have been several changes in staff from September, including the retirement of the previous headteacher and the directors' appointment of the deputy headteacher as acting headteacher. Since 16 November 2015 you have been the senior Principal responsible for the day-to-day operation and improvement of the academy.

Main findings

In a very short time, your leadership, supported by an OGAT vice-principal and the wider OGAT team, is beginning to deliver the changes urgently needed to secure better outcomes for all pupils, but particularly the current Year 11.

However, since the last inspection, actions to address the identified areas of improvement have been ineffective. The 2015 results for the end of Key Stage 4 fell for a fourth successive year, and were far below those predicted. Only 26% of pupils achieved five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. There is no evidence that actions taken in September and October to improve teaching, eliminate low-level disruptive behaviour and improve attendance have brought about any positive change.

Redcar Academy Trust directors took the necessary decisions to secure the support of OGAT and remain keen to adopt the full range of OGAT policies and approaches to teaching and learning as well as the behaviour policy already in place. Achieving clarity for staff, pupils and parents about new policies and procedures is a priority for the directors.

Work in pupils' books, especially pupils who struggle to learn, does not demonstrate the improvements required in teaching, learning and assessment. The academy's marking policy has not been implemented consistently by teachers and as a result pupils do not get the advice they need to improve their work. Leaders check teachers' marking but the feedback they give has not improved consistency or made an impact on pupils' progress.

Redcar Academy leaders have an overoptimistic and inaccurate view of the impact of current teaching on pupils' progress. This means they have not identified the specific aspects of teaching that each teacher needs to develop, so teaching is not improving at a fast enough rate.

Attendance is not improving. Leaders did not ensure enough staff, with the right skills, were in place to take the swift action needed to improve pupils' attendance. Since 16 November, OGAT has provided staff training and allocated time to begin developing systems to improve attendance.

I reviewed the safeguarding policy and single central record. There are some administrative issues which need to be urgently addressed. Staff absence on the day of the visit meant that some of the issues identified could not be resolved. You have committed to contacting me by 4 December to reassure me that the administrative issues relating to staff records have been resolved.

Since 16 November, you and the OGAT team have prioritised sharing expectations of behaviour with pupils and taking robust actions where behaviour is not acceptable. Every pupil with whom I spoke recognised changes in the last nine days. They already describe feeling safer and less worried about their learning being interrupted. They say adults are now starting to make them feel that they are the academy's priority. Pupils really welcome the change because they know it is already making a difference in lessons and improving their chance of getting better grades.

Your presence in the academy is bringing about positive change in pupils' attitudes to learning, but nine days is not long enough for the emerging changes in teaching and assessment to improve the rate of progress for all pupils. Year 11 pupils are benefiting from the current focus on completing English controlled assessments to a high standard.

The academy's action plan is being developed and the directors have requested that measurable targets are included so that they can check that rapid progress is being made.

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

OGAT is currently providing a full-time acting associate executive principal and vice-principal under the direction of a national leader of education, the Regional (North) Chief Executive Officer. The package of support includes OGAT specialist teachers in the full range of subjects and a senior educational welfare officer. This support is having immediate impact especially on the pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Directors are being supported by OGAT's national leader of governance to develop the way they question leaders and steer the academy's progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Board of Directors, the Director of Children's Services for Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and as below.

Yours sincerely

Susan Hayter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Also copied to:

- The Chief Executive Officer, Outwood Grange Academy Trust
- School.NOTIFICATIONS@education.gsi.gov.uk