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27 January 2016

Mr Simon Cotton  
Principal  
DSL V E-ACT Academy  
Hawke Road  
Daventry  
Northamptonshire  
NN11 4LJ

Dear Mr Cotton

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of DSL V E-ACT Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 12 January 2016, 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

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

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, the senior vice principal, the assistant vice principal (teaching and learning), the assistant vice principal (data), the assistant vice principal (safeguarding, disabled pupils and those with special education needs), six heads of faculty, a representative of the trust, the vice-chair of the governing body and the person responsible for maintaining the single central record. I also accompanied you and the senior vice principal on a walk around the academy, observing pupils learning. In addition, I met with 22 pupils and listened to their views of the academy.

The trust's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been a significant number of staffing changes including the appointment of a new Principal and senior vice principal. In all, 27 teachers, more than a quarter of the teaching staff, left the academy at the end of

the summer term and 17 new teachers joined the academy for the beginning of the autumn term. Consequently, only one member of the current senior leadership team was in post at the time of the last inspection. During the autumn term, leaders and governors also restructured the leadership and management of the academy to strengthen capacity, including that of middle leaders. This included establishment of a cadre of middle leaders who head up the six new faculties.

Since the last inspection, there have also been a number of changes to the governing body including, in September 2015, a change of Chair. A new vice-chair was appointed this month.

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

Academy leaders have responded promptly to address the issues identified in the Ofsted report. Leaders have put in place an action plan with the support of the E-ACT Academy Trust. The trust has also agreed a statement of action.

The governing body and the trust have worked effectively to appoint new senior leaders including the Principal and senior vice principal. This was a key action. The senior leadership team is ambitious, organised and determined to improve the academy. Consequently, senior leaders are ensuring the implementation of the academy action plan and the trust's statement of action. The system leader assigned to the academy by the trust to provide support and advice to academy leaders has done so effectively.

Since the inspection, the governing body has been more effective in challenging and supporting academy leaders and has a better understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement than previously. However, in order to secure further necessary improvements, governors need to be more engaged in the improvement of the academy at a strategic level. They also need to be better informed and more questioning of the actions of academy leaders and the resulting impact on teaching and pupil outcomes.

Since September, senior academy leaders have introduced a number of tried, tested and effective systems and processes to improve the quality of teaching and improve the outcomes of the pupils, including:

- a range of strategies to monitor and improve the quality of teaching such as lesson observations and feedback, coaching and professional development
- checking teachers' plans and providing them with feedback
- providing pupils with targets to aim for and periodic assessments to determine how much progress they have made towards their targets
- internal and external moderation of teacher assessments to ensure that they are accurate

- rigorous tracking of pupil progress which enables leaders and teachers to intervene to help those pupils who have fallen behind to catch up
- the establishment of the raising achievement board which enables senior leaders, the trust and the governing body to review the progress made by the pupils and hold senior leaders and middle leaders to account for pupils' outcomes.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have restructured the leadership and management of the academy. A key development is the creation of six faculties from the 13 departments. This initiative has provided the middle leaders with clear responsibility for the outcomes of pupils and the quality of teaching in their subjects. Heads of faculty meet regularly with their teachers to review pupil progress and to determine support for pupils at risk of falling behind. They also employ the strategies listed above, working with senior leaders, to improve the teaching quality in their faculties.

As a result of the improvements made by leaders since the previous inspection there has been an improvement in the profile of the quality of teaching. Similarly, the progress made by pupils has begun to improve. For example, at the last progress review more pupils were making expected or better progress in English and mathematics in each phase of the academy compared to this time last year.

The external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium grant was undertaken in the autumn term. This review has informed the actions leaders and governors are taking to improve their leadership and management. Many of the necessary actions are in the academy action plan and further actions will be added next time the plan is revised. Similarly, the review of governance also took place during the autumn term. Leaders and governors are currently formulating a plan, based on the findings of the review, to improve governance further and this will be finalised shortly.

The trust has provided effective support to the academy since the previous inspection. The systems leader has provided effective support and challenge to leaders. He has also brokered additional support from the trust and from other E-Act academies. The implementation of the raising achievement board by the trust is an effective strategy, which is supporting academy leaders in raising expectations of teachers for the quality of their teaching and the achievements of pupils. The raising achievement board, and the related tracking and pupil progress reviews, also helps academy staff to have a much sharper appreciation of their accountability for the standards achieved by pupils.

The trust has also provided effective support and challenge to the academy in terms of areas such as human resources and finance.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

**Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.**

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Derek Myers  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**