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Dr Roger Harris  
Interim Headteacher  
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Dear Dr Harris

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodlands Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 13 October 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 April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in April 2015, the academy was also judged to require improvement.

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 academy.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteacher, other senior leaders, the governing body and the national leader of education (NLE) who is providing support for the academy, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with the academy's local authority school improvement partner.

I reviewed the academy's self evaluation and its improvement support plan, analysis of 2015 examination results, academy policies, a training plan and minutes of governing body meetings. I also joined you for brief visits to several lessons around the academy.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection in April, the headteacher has left the academy. You were appointed as interim headteacher from 1 September 2015. The Chair of the Governing Body has stepped down and a new Chair has been appointed. The academy is investigating the possibility of joining a multi-academy trust. The 2015 provisional GCSE results, with just 33% of students achieving five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics, place the academy below the government's current floor standards.

## **Main findings**

Following an initially lacklustre reaction to the areas requiring improvement identified in the April inspection, the appointment of the interim headteacher from 1 September 2015 has brought an energetic and robust response. He has also galvanised the academy in response to the disappointing GCSE examination results of 2015. Aply supported by senior leaders, an NLE and the local authority, he is bringing about a rapid change in the academy.

Clear improvement plans are now in place and actions are beginning to show some early signs of impact. However, with several changes having been introduced in a short space of time, leaders understand the need to methodically monitor the ongoing impact of new initiatives and then to evaluate their success.

The disappointing GCSE results in 2015 were unexpected because teachers had forecast much better outcomes in many subjects. Leaders correctly believe that improving teachers' ability to assess students' work accurately, and therefore correctly forecast results, is an essential step to improving outcomes. Teachers have been given training and new systems have been introduced, but it is currently too early to judge the success of the new systems.

Leaders have implemented new systems to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment accurately, using information from a range of sources rather than relying on scheduled lesson observations that had led to an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching in the past. The new systems are beginning to enable leaders to identify weaknesses in teaching quickly and then to address them through carefully targeted training.

The academy's middle leaders now better understand their accountability for outcomes in their area and their role in leading the improvement of teaching,

learning and assessment in their subjects. Each head of department has met with the interim headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss their subject's 2015 examination results and to agree improvement priorities and actions.

Governors are not currently able to support and challenge the academy's leaders effectively. They are a committed and ambitious group who desperately want to see the academy improve. However, they are currently over-reliant on the interim headteacher and they lack the detailed knowledge that they need in order to be able to hold leaders to account as they should.

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

### **External support**

Since the appointment of the interim headteacher, the academy has made effective use of external support from both an NLE and from the local authority. The NLE has brokered support for several subjects with a focus on improving teaching and raising achievement, as well as mentoring the interim headteacher. Some support for governance has also been planned. The local authority has provided a school improvement partner and is planning a review of several aspects of the academy, including finance and teaching. There has not yet been sufficient time to demonstrate whether external support has had a significant impact on teaching or outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**