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14 September 2015

Ms B Martin
Chief Executive Principal
The Ridings Federation Winterbourne International Academy
High Street
Winterbourne
South Gloucestershire
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Dear Ms Martin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Ridings Federation Winterbourne International Academy

Following my visit to your school on Monday 14 September 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. Do also pass my thanks on to the Chair of Trustees for his time.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school 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 previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and trustees are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The academy's senior leaders and trustees should take immediate action to:

- complete the external review of the governance of the academy to evaluate the effectiveness of the new arrangements
- restore the trust and confidence of staff to enable the changes made to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to be fully effective
- gain the support of parents for the actions necessary to improve the quality of education for students in the academy.

The academy's senior leaders should take immediate action to:

- make clearer how the quality of teaching will be determined through its impact on students' progress and achievement
- ensure that all teachers fully understand the principles underpinning the academy's new approach to the curriculum and assessment so that they place much greater emphasis on students' prior achievement in their planning and teaching
- ensure that teaching in the sixth form leads to all students making good progress from their starting points
- involve students more in determining how to build on their improved behaviour to develop more positive attitudes to their learning.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I recommend that this academy receives at least one further monitoring visit within this academy year.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the federation chief executive principal, the academy principal, the principals of the two other academies in the federation and the chair of the federation's trustees to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection, the most recent information on students' achievement, the arrangements for safeguarding and protecting students, and other information. The improvement points in the academy's action plan were evaluated and discussed. Visits were made to lessons with the chief executive and academy principal to look at students' work and talk to them about it. Informal discussions with students and some teachers took place during the morning break.

Context

The academy is part of a federation with two other academies. The governance arrangements cover all three academies.

There have been significant changes to many aspects of the academy, and the federation, since the inspection in April 2015, when the chief executive principal had been in post for one week. An internal review of governance across the federation resulted in a restructuring that has just been implemented.

There have been key changes in leadership for this academy and within the federation. Senior leaders have roles across all three of the academies. The principal of the Winterbourne International Academy took up post on 1 June 2015. Five heads of 'super faculties' took up post at the start of this term; they have responsibility for a group of subjects across all of the academies in the federation. In addition, there have been changes to the leadership of some key subjects. The principal of the Yate

International Academy started in April 2015 and has responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning across the federation. The roles of some other key leaders have been clarified to ensure better accountability. A large number of teachers were appointed for the start of this term.

The academy's pastoral system has been reorganised. Heads of 'guilds' have responsibility for achievement as well as, for example, students' behaviour and attendance. A new structure of tutor groups has been introduced.

The curriculum for all year groups, including the sixth form, has been reviewed and a very different model introduced from the start of this term. Alongside this, a new system for the collection, analysis and use of assessment information by teachers, subject leaders and senior leaders has been implemented.

At the time of the visit, some teachers were in dispute with the senior leaders and trustees about the changes being made in the academy.

Main findings

- The extensive changes made by senior leaders have not yet had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the academy. As a result, students' achievement has not risen quickly enough, particularly for disadvantaged students and some of the most able. There is still too much variation in achievement across subjects. In the sixth form, there is too much variation in the achievement of students with similar starting points in many subjects. While the right systems are in place, senior leaders have not yet ensured that the principles that underpin the changes to the curriculum and assessment arrangements are fully understood by all teachers. As a result these aspects of the academy's work are currently not being implemented well.
- Senior leaders and trustees have a clear vision for the academy and have very ambitious plans for radically transforming and improving the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the arrangements for securing much improved achievement for students. They are clear about what needs to be done. The academy action plan is sharply focused on rapidly bringing about the improvements required. However, many teachers either do not support the changes or do not fully understand what they need to do.
- Senior leaders understand that too much teaching takes too little account of what students can and cannot do, and what they do and do not know and understand, at the start of a new topic. The curriculum has been transformed to place this at the heart of the new modular arrangements so that teaching focuses on ensuring that all students make good progress from their starting points. However, at this stage, too much teaching takes too little account of students' prior achievement and often repeats work that students can already do. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. The pace in the improvement of teaching

is currently too slow to ensure that the academy meets senior leaders' ambitious targets by the end of the academic year.

- The academy's system for gathering, analysing and using assessment information has been completely overhauled as the previous systems were ineffective. Leaders have yet to ensure that all teachers and subject leaders fully understand the system and use it well.
- The evidence from the visit indicates that many teachers have the skills and ability to make the changes to their practice needed, but do not fully understand how to focus their teaching to ensure that all students make good progress from their starting points.
- Senior leaders have introduced robust systems for tracking students' progress and for monitoring the quality of teaching. The roles of subject leaders, the new heads of faculty and senior leaders are clear. These systems were introduced at the start of the term and have not yet had enough impact to be evaluated.
- The academy undertook a very detailed analysis of students' attendance at the time of the April 2015 inspection. While attendance was good overall, it was not good enough for disadvantaged students and those with disabilities or special educational needs. The attendance of these groups is much improved as a result of actions that were targeted well at individual students. The academy leaders continue to target individual students so that the ambitious targets for improved attendance can be achieved.
- The academy has successfully worked to improve students' punctuality to lessons, conduct and behaviour. However, too many do not show positive attitudes to their learning. Students have not been sufficiently involved in determining the expected characteristics of good learners.
- Overall attainment in the sixth form has been high. This masks the wide variation in the achievement of students with similar starting points. Senior leaders recognise this and the modular approach to the curriculum used elsewhere in the academy has also been introduced into the sixth form. This places the same emphasis on teaching building on prior achievement so that all students can make good progress from their starting points. It is too early to evaluate this, but evidence from the visit indicates that teachers need more training in how to do this well.
- The changes to governance are focused on providing much clearer lines of accountability and more independent evaluation of assessment and other information. These changes are designed to enable trustees and members of the standards committee to hold senior leaders to account more effectively. These changes were based on an internal review of the effectiveness of governance. The external review arising from the April inspection has not yet been completed.

- Safeguarding arrangements have been tightened and systems and procedures are secure and meet all requirements. For example, senior leaders carefully considered any safeguarding risks in planning for the recent disruption to the academy arising from the dispute with some teachers. Good use is made of external advice to check the robustness of the arrangements. Trustees monitor the arrangements carefully.

External support

The academy works closely with the other academies in the federation.

The academy has held meetings with the Regional Schools Commissioner who is providing on-going support and monitoring. The academy is outward looking and the chief executive principal uses links with other academies to learn from good practice elsewhere. The academy works with the local authority for support and evaluation.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Trustees, the Director of Children's Services for South Gloucestershire, the Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

James Sage

Her Majesty's Inspector