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Mr Richard Haupt
Principal
The Ridings Federation Winterbourne International Academy
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Dear Mr Haupt

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

Following my visit to your school on 14 October 2016, 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 second 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. The first monitoring inspection took place in September 2015 and judged that leaders and governors were not taking the actions required to improve the school. This led to this second monitoring inspection. The judgement of this second visit is also that: Senior leaders and the trust 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 quality of teaching has not improved noticeably since the April 2015 inspection. Pupils currently in Years 7 to 11 are not making the progress they should. Leaders at all levels have been unable to make the changes necessary to improve the school. They have been poorly led by the federation's senior leaders. The governance of the school has been ineffective in providing you, and other leaders, with the support you need and in holding you to account for the actions you have taken.

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- trustees and governors provide school leaders with the support they need to rapidly improve the school and robustly hold them to account for the actions they take
- the improvement plan has greater precision about what will actually be done to

improve the quality of teaching with frequent and challenging milestones so that improvements can be monitored closely and adjustments made accordingly

- all teachers fully understand what they need to do to improve their teaching and are trained and supported well to enable them to do so.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal, other senior leaders, the chair of the federation's trustees and two member of the local governing body. The inspector held informal discussions with pupils and sixth-form students during the morning break. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Your analysis of 2016 examination results was discussed. Visits with senior leaders were made to lessons in all year groups and in a wide range of subjects.

Context

The Ridings Federation Winterbourne International Academy is part of the Ridings' Federation of Academies, a multi-academy trust.

There have been significant changes in the arrangements for governance within the federation since the 2015 inspection. At various times there has been a board of trustees with no local governing body, a local governing body across all schools in the federation, and separate local governing bodies for each school. On occasions, whole governing bodies have been changed. A new chair of federation trustees took up post and a new board and local governing body were established from the start of this school year.

The former federation chief executive principal left following the first monitoring visit in September 2015. A new chief executive principal took up post on 1 February 2016. He was unavailable at the time of this second visit.

A number of arrangements instigated by the previous chief executive principal have since been abandoned. These include:

- each school principal having specific responsibilities across all federation schools
- a number of 'super heads of faculty' with cross-school and cross-phase subject leadership responsibilities
- the curriculum and assessment policy.

At the start of the summer term 2016, a new system for monitoring the quality of teaching and a new rewards system for pupils were introduced.

Since the start of this school year, the roles of senior leaders have changed and new curriculum and assessment arrangements have been introduced.

Main findings

The overall quality of teaching has not improved noticeably since the 2015 inspection. The points for improvement in the inspection report and those identified in the letter following the first monitoring inspection in September 2015 have not been addressed effectively. The progress of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is poor in many classes and in many subjects, including in English and mathematics.

Teachers' expectations are too low because they do not have a precise understanding of what pupils already can do, know and understand. In lower school classes, for example in science and mathematics, work completed in primary school is repeated at a lower level. Pupils in all year groups are set tasks that are well below the standard that the school's assessment arrangements indicate that they should be achieving. The most able pupils are not challenged to make the progress they are capable of. Expectations of disadvantaged pupils are too low for them to make up any differences in their achievement when compared with other pupils. Some teachers are unaware of the targets for pupils generated by the school's assessment system. Consequently, they do not know if pupils are on track and often set work that is too easy or that will not enable pupils to achieve their targets.

The GCSE results for pupils who completed Year 11 in July 2016 showed improvement and many pupils performed well. However, disadvantaged pupils, particularly in mathematics, did not do as well as they should. Much of this improvement was due to intensive support and interventions rather than significant and sustained improvements in the quality of teaching for all year groups.

You and other senior and subject leaders have not made the changes required to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement, or the actions taken have not led to widespread and systemic improvement. When looking at pupils' work, your leaders focus too much on checking marking and too little on evaluating the level and quality of the work. Up until the start of this school year, as a result of all of the changes made, some of your other senior leaders were not clear about their roles and were unable to support subject leaders effectively. Subject leaders have been unable to raise the quality of teaching sufficiently where required. There is some good teaching in the school. This is not used well to raise performance elsewhere.

You and other school leaders have not been supported well by the federation's senior leaders. In each of its guises up to the end of the 2015/16 academic year, the governance of the school provided ineffective support for you and other senior leaders. Governors have not robustly held you to account for the failures in improving the quality of teaching quickly enough. Following the review of governance undertaken in February 2016, a new trust board, with a new chair, and local governing board were set up and became operational on 1 September 2016. The new board and local governing body have a good breadth and depth of expertise and are well placed to oversee the improvements required, although it is too early to see the impact at this time, and managing the pace of improvement required to make this a good school will be a huge challenge.

The improvement plan has been updated for 2016/17. While it identifies accurately the areas requiring improvement, it is not clear how the actions proposed will deal with the extent of the embedded weaknesses in teaching and subject leadership. The key objective in the plan for leadership and management is 'leaders take effective action to tackle areas requiring improvement; leadership makes an impact'; it is not clear how this will be achieved. The actions lack precision, for example in how the significant weakness in teaching will be resolved, and do not fully acknowledge the depth of the problems to be solved. The actions are more about lines of accountability than getting to the heart of the weaknesses in teaching. It will be difficult for the local governing body and the academy trust to use the plan as a means of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions to be taken.

There have been improvements in the sixth form. The 2016 results show that students achieve well in more subjects and underachievement in others has been mostly dealt with. The extensive variation in the achievement of students with similar starting points in a wide range of subjects evident in 2015 has been reduced noticeably. The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is better than in the lower school, but pockets of very poor practice still exist.

External support

School leaders have been very poorly supported by the federation leaders and arrangements for governance. The frequent changes in governance have been unsettling. All of the previous iterations of governance have been ineffective in securing the improvements required. The school has made little progress since the inspection in April 2015. The current chair of trustees has a much greater depth of understanding of the seriousness of the school's position and has put in place a new board and local governing body that are much better placed to provide the essential balance of support and challenge to the school's leaders. She also understands the need for additional external leadership support and has already initiated this.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the federation board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner, the Education Funding Agency and the director of children's services for South Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector