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24 June 2024

Tim Marston
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Dear Mr Marston

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Willenhall E-ACT Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 6 June 2024, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other senior leaders, the national director of secondary education of the trust and other trust leaders the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also scrutinised the single central register, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation documents. I talked to pupils, and I visited a sample of lessons. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

Since the last inspection in December 2022, the school has seen a change in leadership. You took up your post as headteacher in December 2023. Subsequently, many new senior leaders joined your leadership team. You have rightly spent time focusing on the most

pressing issues first. For example, you have restructured senior leaders' roles and responsibilities. All senior leaders now have clearly defined areas of focus to bring about the needed improvements. As a result, there are signs of improvements across some areas of the school. However, more work and time are needed to ensure these improvements have a long-lasting impact on pupils' outcomes and attitudes. Furthermore, you have made significant efforts to ensure that the school is fully staffed with subject specialists. With the assistance of the trust, you have recruited numerous new staff for September 2024. Consequently, all middle leaders and teaching staff in the upcoming academic year are experts in their respective subjects.

You and the trust have begun to strengthen the quality of education by ensuring all staff have access to subject-specific training. In addition, you have introduced consistent approaches to teaching in all lessons to support pupils' learning. These approaches include ensuring teachers recap previous knowledge and giving pupils regular opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned. While showing signs of being effective, these strategies have not had time to embed fully. Therefore, they have not yet impacted on the outcomes pupils achieve.

One of the areas highlighted in the previous inspection was the lack of a robust programme for supporting pupils with their reading. You have introduced a new reading scheme to help all pupils, especially those at the early stages of learning, to read. All pupils now have dedicated reading time and undergo regular assessments to determine their reading levels and pinpoint any gaps in their reading ability. Effective interventions have been implemented to support pupils in catching up and becoming fluent readers. As a result of these efforts, more pupils are now reading at a level appropriate for their age.

Many trust leaders are new in post and have, in a short space of time, gained a clear and realistic view of the school's performance. They have worked hard to bring stability to the school in turbulent times. You and senior leaders have brought about the necessary urgency to improve this school. All leaders have a forensic and accurate overview of the school's current effectiveness but, most importantly, are realistic about the persistent challenges. There is now a clear plan for improvement in place, which has begun to make a positive difference. For example, there are clear plans to make improvements to the school environment.

Attendance and persistent absenteeism were identified as weaknesses in the last inspection. The work underway is beginning to make a positive difference. You have introduced a range of strategies to re-engage pupils and their families. Overall attendance, although still low, is improving.

You have begun to make positive changes to the way in which adults deal with and manage pupils' behaviour. You now focus on positive reinforcement and restorative practice. You have introduced a rewards system and begun to build strong, positive relationships with pupils. This is beginning to bear fruit, as fewer pupils are now receiving consequences or suspensions. However, more work is needed to ensure that behaviour around school and in lessons is always positive, calm and orderly.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO of the E-ACT trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Bianka Zemke
His Majesty's Inspector