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Marianne Gentilli
The Littlehampton Academy
Fitzalan Road
Littlehampton
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Dear Ms Gentilli

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Littlehampton Academy

Following my visit to your school on 15 May 2014, 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 school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 12–13 December 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Acting Principal, two Vice Principals, the Academies Chief Officer and the Chair of the Academy Improvement Board. The sponsor's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

A new Acting Principal joined the academy on 1 January 2014 in place of the previous Principal. Two Vice Principals also joined the academy at this time. The academy council was replaced with an academy improvement board in January.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The Woodard Academies Trust has ensured that the key players recognise the need for rapid improvement at the academy. Appropriate high-level plans indicate that systems to support the academy are in place and that senior leaders are properly accountable for the improvement journey. The Acting Principal is rightly seeking to

ensure that all staff have clear job descriptions against which they can also be held to account. She has reviewed the appraisal system to ensure that it is robust.

The Academy Improvement Board meets regularly to monitor the improvements made by the academy and to determine where plans need to be reviewed and additional actions taken. The Academies Chief Officer is accountable to the trust for the achievement of students. Because the academy council was stepped down and a different system of governance has been put in place, there has not yet been a complete review of governance in its current structure. This, like the review of the use of the pupil premium monies, is planned for the future.

The Trust and senior leaders have sought to ensure the engagement of staff, parents and the community in the improvement process. This work has ensured that the level of commitment to improvement at the academy amongst these groups is good.

The academy's improvement plan outlines appropriate activities that the leadership team are undertaking to secure improvements. These include solid work to introduce robust tracking of students' progress and to set individual students' suitably challenging targets based on high expectations and underpinned by secure data. This work is important. As senior leaders recognise, once the data are properly accurate, the tracking will enable teachers to deliver lessons that meet the needs of all their learners and to intervene immediately if any student fails to make appropriate progress. It will also enable senior leaders to support and challenge teachers when students are not making the progress that they should.

Leaders have begun to address weaknesses in the quality of teaching. They have identified where the strengths and weaknesses in teaching lie and are rolling out a targeted and appropriate programme of training, support and challenge. They have not yet introduced minimum expectations in respect of the pace of improvement in this area. The curriculum has been reviewed and a new curriculum will be introduced in September. Lessons are still far too long and some are subject to low-level disruption by students.

Senior leaders are training middle leaders to fulfil their leadership role more effectively. They are being explicit about their expectations of all staff in respect of professional behaviour, teamwork and their leadership and management roles. A restructuring of the leadership of the school is planned.

Despite the many positive actions taken by staff, systems are not in place to ensure that the pace of improvement will be fast enough. There are not yet enough leaders of change and improvement at different levels in the school.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The academy's improvement plan is not fit for purpose. Although appropriate actions and overall objectives are outlined in it, there is too much detail. There is not enough clarity in terms of the intended impact of different actions and how this will be measured. As the Acting Principal is aware, careful planning is needed to determine the timeline for the various improvement activities to ensure that the journey is well managed and appropriately paced.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Academy Improvement Board, the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex and the Chief Academy Officer of the Woodard Academies Trust. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Emma Ing
Her Majesty's Inspector