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17 December 2014

Mrs Annette Hall
Executive Principal
Leeds East Academy
South Parkway
Seacroft
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS14 6TY

Dear Mrs Hall

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Leeds East Academy

Following my visit to your school on 16 December 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in June 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Director of Children's Services for Leeds, the Chair of the Local Accountability Board, the DfE Academies Advisers Unit and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Heather Richardson
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good or better in all parts of the academy, including the sixth form, by ensuring that:
 - inadequate teaching is rapidly dealt with and the proportion of good or better teaching continues to increase
 - all teachers have high expectations of students and use the information they have about their attainment to plan work that is challenging for all abilities
 - students are given clear, regular and helpful feedback on their work, and the level at which they are working, so they understand how to improve
 - all teachers expect the very best of students' behaviour and achievement in lessons and that they apply the academy's policy of sanctions and rewards consistently.

- Raise standards, especially in English, mathematics and science, by consistently setting and meeting targets based on students making at least three levels of progress between Years 7 and 11.

- Improve attendance in all year groups, including in the sixth form, so that it is at least in line with the national average.

- Ensure that leaders at all levels implement the academy's detailed improvement plans rigorously, and that middle leaders thoroughly monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions on students' outcomes.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 16 December 2014

Evidence

The inspector met with the executive Principal, the head of school, the vice-Principal and the director of learning. A meeting was also held with the Chair of the academy's governing body, the Local Accountability Board. Documentation provided by the school was reviewed and the single central record was checked. The inspection focused on the impact of the new sponsorship arrangements and the academy's progress in raising standards and improving attendance.

Context

The academy is now part of the White Rose Academies Trust. This change follows the termination of E-ACT's sponsorship, as required by the Department for Education. The Local Accountability Board has been established. Most governors have continued in post, but there is a new Chair and two new members. There have been no changes to the senior leadership team, but an additional appointment has been made to the wider leadership group to support behaviour. While there have been some staffing changes, staffing is stable overall.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The academy's leaders have continued their relentless focus on improvement. The changes in the government's measures of students' attainment in GCSE and equivalent qualifications means that it is not possible to make direct comparisons between the provisional published data for 2014 and that of previous years. Using the new measures, the gap between the performance of students nationally and that of the academy's Year 11 students in 2014 remains wide. However, the overall results attained by students represent a marked improvement on the previous year when students' best, rather than their first, grades for a subject are taken into account. The academy's leaders have a detailed view of the strengths and weaknesses in students' achievement. They are applying a range of strategies to tackle areas of underperformance in particular subjects and by groups of students, as well as by individual students. The academy continues to track all students' progress systematically and to provide well-targeted support, including mentoring and additional classes, to raise achievement. Students' achievement in the sixth form was in line with expectations and enabled those leaving school to access their higher education courses.

The academy is continuing to develop its strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are well-considered and incorporate a range of evidence. There are clear mechanisms for following up development points identified through monitoring. These include differentiated professional development sessions to match the needs of individual teachers. The systems to monitor and improve teaching are still in the

process of being embedded and their impact evaluated, but the academy can show how they are being used to promote better teaching. Similarly, while the senior leaders recognise that the leadership of some subject areas is not sufficiently robust, they can demonstrate where and why there has been improvement. Senior leaders have made effective use of the partnership with Leeds West Academy to maximise opportunities to share good practice.

The academy was successful in increasing attendance rates during the previous academic year. Attendance during the autumn term has dipped but the academy has analysed the reasons for this, including holidays being taken by families during term time. Attendance has also been adversely affected as a consequence of the introduction of the academy's new behaviour policy, which has resulted in an increase in fixed-term exclusions. However, the most recent evidence is showing that the students are reaping the benefits of a more robust behaviour policy and that exclusions are reducing and attendance is improving. The effectiveness of the behaviour policy in reducing low-level disruption has been noted by external evaluators. Students are also identifying the impact on their own behaviour.

The academy's use of external evaluators to review and challenge its practice reflects the commitment of the senior leaders to continuous and embedded improvement. In addition to the new behaviour policy, evaluators have been used to test out the impact of the academy's use of pupil premium funding (additional government money) to support disadvantaged students. Other evaluators have reviewed overall progress since the previous inspection, including testing the academy's self-evaluation.

The academy has continued its clear focus on improvement at the same time as managing significant and protracted change with the move to new sponsorship arrangements. This has taken up substantial time and energy, mainly that of the executive Principal. While the change, and hence the associated work, was not of the academy's making, senior leaders are confident that the new sponsorship arrangements will be increasingly beneficial to the academy. Systems and procedures resulting from the new sponsorship arrangements have yet to be embedded and evaluated for their effectiveness. However, some well-reasoned decisions have been made to promote continuity and challenge. This includes, for example, the role of the former Chair of Governors in monitoring standards across the trust's academies. While the Chair of the Local Accountability Board is new to this role, he has served as a governor for this academy and a partner academy and brings significant experience and expertise. As already noted, although there are new governors, others continue in post. This means there is continuity as well as the additional expertise of the new governors. The overlap between membership of the board of the White Rose Academies Trust and of the academy's Local Accountability Board promotes consistency and enhances communications. While the Local Accountability Board is, technically, a very recent structure, roles and responsibilities have been established and ways of developing its work have been identified. There

is a clear understanding of the Board's role as 'critical friend' to challenge and support the academy and early evidence of how this is being effected.

Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- The strength of senior leaders' commitment to improving the life-chances of students and, hence, to improving what the academy provides for them.
- The resolution of the change of sponsorship arrangements, achieved without disruption to the academy's drive to improve the outcomes for its students.

External support

As noted at the previous monitoring inspection, the academy continues to benefit from local partnership arrangements, especially with Leeds West Academy. The academy also continues to value highly the support and challenge provided by its improvement partner.