

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



15 December 2015

Ms Vivien Swaida  
Interim Principal  
Weavers Academy  
Brickhill Road  
Wellingborough  
Northamptonshire  
NN8 3JH

Dear Ms Swaida

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Weavers Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 27 November 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.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and the multi-academy trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with the executive principal who is also a representative of the trust, the interim principal, the interim associate principal and other senior leaders including the Chair of the local Governing Body. I talked to the head of sixth form and leaders of the three core curriculum areas: English, mathematics and science. I also met with pupils in Years 8, 10 and 11 and talked to them about the actions taken and progress made since the last inspection. I talked to pupils informally, visited a range of lessons and observed pupils' behaviour around the academy. I considered a range of documentation provided by the academy including leaders' plans and self-evaluation, the pupil premium review and subsequent action plan, and the outcomes of leaders' monitoring activities,

particularly in relation to their work in driving improvements in learning and teaching.

## **Context**

The Principal of the academy at the time of the last inspection left in August and was succeeded in October by an interim principal, an interim associate principal and an executive principal. The learning leaders of three subject areas: mathematics, modern foreign languages and humanities also left and various arrangements are now in place to lead these departments. Several teaching staff have left and others are leaving at the end of this term.

## **Main findings**

Following the inspection and disappointing examination results in summer 2015, Creative Education Trust rightly recognised that the task of turning the academy around so that it offers a good education to all pupils poses significant challenges. While there is no room for complacency, actions taken since the last inspection have shown decisiveness and determination to get the academy back on track. They have introduced a new leadership structure which is designed to allow the interim principal the scope to drive much needed improvements in teaching, assessment and learning, particularly in English. The associate principal meanwhile is working with the school leaders of the sixth form, mathematics and science to develop good practice in these areas and the executive principal guides and supports the school in respect of more generic matters. In addition, the academy has been well supported by the trust's director of standards. The trust is aware that while these arrangements are currently working effectively, in the longer term, substantive solutions must be sought.

It is early days. You have been in post for just two months. Nevertheless, at the moment, you and your academy leadership team are demonstrating a strong appetite for and good capacity to secure improvement. Tough decisions have been taken, plans made, a vision established and systems introduced to ensure that all individuals working at the academy are properly held to account for their part in delivering an improving educational offer. Those pupils I spoke to strongly approve of the changes, one commenting that, 'The school has completely stepped up its game since Ms Swaida came.'

A change which pupils of all ages appreciate is the current approach adopted by teachers in most departments to giving feedback and also the time for individuals to complete tailored tasks to help them to master areas of difficulty. I saw some excellent examples of how this approach had helped pupils make good progress in mathematics books. Pupils explained that, particularly in Year 11, teachers are becoming very good at identifying precisely what it is that individual pupils need to learn or improve and setting work that helps them do this. The subject leaders that I

met explained how they have become more confident in researching individual pupil's needs and using the results of their research to direct teaching.

One important goal is to reach the academy target of consistently good and outstanding teaching at all times. As we visited lessons together, it became clear to me that you and your vice principal know the strengths and also the weaknesses in teaching across the academy. There remain significant inconsistencies in teaching quality and teaching is not yet good. However, I was encouraged to see how you are working to coach, mentor, challenge and hold to account teachers who are at different points in their own professional development. Your involvement in this is underpinned by clear and robust systems of monitoring, recording and analysing teachers' progress. Plans to support individual teachers develop their skills are succinct, focused and progress against these is monitored.

Many pupils at the academy have not developed adequate literacy skills. I did not see enough being done across all subjects to ensure that these pupils were properly supported to catch up in this important area. Some lessons lacked pace and challenge and too many allowed significant numbers of pupils to coast. I also saw evidence of some really good teaching, with a strong focus on the development of skills, on targeted tasks and appropriate levels of challenge.

Around the school, pupils behaved well and we saw no disruption of learning in lessons. They wear their uniform with pride and look smart. Nevertheless, as you acknowledge, not all pupils are using their learning time productively in lessons or making an effort to do well. Some of the teaching styles adopted by some teachers were contributing to this tendency.

Your head of sixth form assured me that the quality of careers information and advice is much improved. Certainly, significant changes in the admission criteria for entry to the sixth form have resulted in a much higher proportion of young people staying the course in Year 12. In addition, there have been changes in the courses offered to ensure that everyone is doing valuable work. Systems to quality assure teaching have been introduced. The academy has supported those retaking English and mathematics GCSEs carefully and is quietly confident that these pupils will meet with success. I will consider this and other areas of sixth form provision when I next visit.

Both the head of sixth form and the subject leaders that I met are being well supported to grow into their leadership roles. Supporting these post-holders to become highly effective is time consuming, but important. The work that they are starting to do in their departments is supporting teachers across the academy to develop consistency of practice and good teaching habits. When I next visit, I look forward to meeting subject leaders from other curriculum areas to find out how well your support of middle leadership is building a firm foundation for improvement across the whole academy.

All staff have recently been trained to be more attuned to the pastoral needs of pupils and to respond more effectively to individuals. Through your leadership, staff have been encouraged to support and help pupils who are struggling to behave and meet basic norms of behaviour. This is hugely benefitting individual pupils who express gratitude for the caring support that they have been given. It has enabled some to be successful where before they were not doing well.

Members of your team carefully explained to me that the academy has significantly improved the quality of the data about pupil progress that is gathered and gave examples of how pupils' performance data is now externally moderated and checked. The process sounds robust. This is important, as previous failures to ensure that this data was accurate are likely to have contributed to the disappointing achievements of pupils. It is too early to judge whether the information gathered is realistic and being used effectively, but this too will be something that I will pay keen attention to on my next visit.

The academy improvement plan offers a reasonable basis from which to drive improvement. It is a working document. The governing body holds leaders to account well. Members have a clear understanding of the importance of swift action to remedy weaknesses and the Chair of the Governing Body is astute in her strategic thinking. A suitably rigorous evaluation of the use of pupil premium has been completed by an external adviser. The evaluation rightly made a range of suggestions which either have been or are being appropriately addressed by the academy. The current plans for the use of these monies are fitting.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. As there remains much still to do to ensure that the academy offers a good education, I will be returning to monitor progress in the future.

### **External support**

The Creative Education Trust has responded swiftly, making tough decisions and committing considerable personnel and resources to ensure that the academy has begun to improve. They have appointed a senior leadership team and hold them to account for their work to improve the progress made and attainment of pupils. The trust's own director of education is acting as executive principal and is taking an active role in directing improvements. The trust has also provided strong support from their director of standards who has worked with the senior leadership team. In particular, this has resulted in the development of good systems and processes to underpin the work of the interim principal and her team.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Creative Education Trust, and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Emma Ing  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**