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6 November 2014

Mr R Lewis
The Principal
Peak Academy and Greenfield Academy
Drake Lane
Dursley
GL11 5HD

Dear Mr Lewis

Special measures monitoring inspection of Peak Academy

Following my visit to your school on 5 November 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 in June 2014. As at the previous inspection, it was conducted at the same time as the first monitoring inspection of Greenfield Academy. This is because the students are taught alongside the students at the Greenfield Academy, under the same leadership, management and governance. Again, as previously, the lead inspectors worked closely together to support the leadership team in managing the two inspections and in producing the published monitoring inspection reports.

Evidence

During this inspection, we held meetings with you, senior leaders, the Key Stage 4 manager, the business manager, the Chair of Governors and the Director for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. In addition, a telephone conversation was held with the safeguarding officer and extended services coordinator. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plans were evaluated. Inspectors reviewed the school's information about students' achievement. They undertook a series of short visits to lessons and visited all classrooms at the Peak Academy site and at the Peak Annex. The inspectors examined the single central record of staff employed at the school and a range of documentation, including the governing body minutes.

Context

There have been significant changes to leadership roles since the inspection in June 2014. In July 2014, a safeguarding officer with responsibility for being the designated safeguarding lead joined the school. This person is also the special educational needs and extended services coordinator. In October 2014, the school appointed a business manager. In addition, an assistant headteacher with responsibility for pastoral management, and a Key Stage 4 manager for the Peak Annex joined the school two days before this visit. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan were substantially revised in September 2014. An extensive amount of refurbishment work to the buildings and grounds was completed during the summer holidays.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

Your ambitious drive and the dedication of other senior leaders make it clear to all staff the expectations of how students can and will learn. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. You have been successful in building a new team of leaders and managers. All new appointees, prior to taking up their posts, have a comprehensive understanding of, and involvement with, the academy. This has meant that when they join the academy they 'hit the ground running', with a shared sense of purpose and able to lead and manage their areas of responsibility immediately.

Since September 2014, Key Stage 4 students now have access to a suitable range of externally accredited courses. This includes English and mathematics at GCSE level. Senior leaders and the academy sponsor are resolute in their determination that another cohort of Year 11 students will not leave the academy without appropriate qualifications.

The academy's use of the pupil premium is currently being externally reviewed, as recommended at the last inspection. Whilst information about the use of the pupil premium funding in 2013–14 explains how the funding was spent, there is not enough detail about how its use has improved students' achievement. It is not explained how the funding for the current school year will be used.

The academy is using new systems to measure students' behaviour and the progress students make in their learning. Consequently, students have been set aspirational targets. All staff understand how often and in what ways the students' progress towards these targets will be measured. As part of this, some subjects such as art are spearheading a new teaching approach designed to link lesson planning with what students know, understand and can do. While showing signs of early promise, it is too soon to judge the impact the new systems and teaching approaches are having.

A series of home visits have already taken place since the last inspection and have improved the relationship between the academy and students' parents. Overall, the school's website contains a good range of useful information for parents and students. The refurbishment and, in particular, the 'Learn2Learn' accommodation provide a welcoming and nurturing environment, indoors and out, for those students who need it.

The academy sponsor's statement of action identifies how the action plan will be monitored and how parents will be involved. The academy action plan covers all the areas identified for improvement in the last inspection report. The revised statement of action and the plan provide a clear path for everyone to follow. The people responsible for leading on the different parts of the action plan are identified. However, it is not always obvious who will measure the quality of the improvement work being undertaken. Consequently, the mechanisms for the governing body, and the academy sponsor, to judge the effectiveness of the action taken need to be strengthened so that improvement is swift.

The external review of governance, which was recommended at the last inspection, has not taken place. However, there have been new recruits to the governing body. Their experience and expertise complement and considerably strengthen it. Each member of the governing body has been allocated a specific area of responsibility related to the work of the academy. The governors have visited the academy and held discussions with staff related to these areas. The results of these fact-finding exercises are shared with the whole governing body on a monthly basis. This has enabled the governors as individuals, and as a whole, to have a clear understanding about the current strengths and areas that need rapid improvement.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

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 Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector