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29 June 2012

Mr W Jordon
Interim Executive Principal
North Shore Health Academy
Junction Road
Stockton-on-Tees
Cleveland
TS19 9LT

Dear Mr Jordon

Special measures: monitoring inspection of North Shore Health Academy

Following my visit with Peter Bannon, Additional Inspector, to your school on 27 and 28 June 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State and the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Briggs
Lead Inspector

January 2012



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Improve students' behaviour and the impact this has on learning by:
 - enabling teachers to take a consistent and suitably robust approach to improving discipline
 - introducing an effective strategy for behaviour management
 - ensuring that the work of the internal exclusion unit has a successful and sustained impact on students' attitudes to learning.

- Improve students' attendance by:
 - analysing the reasons for poor attendance and evaluating whether academy policies are being implemented robustly
 - analysing students' views about their enjoyment and engagement in lessons and the impact of their experiences on attendance and punctuality
 - taking more robust action to ensure persistent absence is reduced.

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - building upon the successful curriculum initiatives in Key Stage 3 to enable more students to enjoy lessons
 - giving teachers more time to share good practice
 - ensuring that teachers plan and deliver learning activities effectively so that they meet the needs and interests of different groups of students, especially those who have specific weaknesses in their literacy skills
 - further reducing the proportion of lessons taught by supply or temporary staff.

- Develop the academy's capacity to improve by:
 - ensuring that the governing body and trustees challenge the performance of leaders more robustly
 - establishing a more cohesive and effective leadership team with clearly-identified roles, responsibilities and performance targets that have direct links to outcomes for students
 - building upon the improvements made to the quality of middle leadership to devise a more effective curriculum at Key Stage 4
 - identifying a new lead trustee so that the long-term future of the academy is assured.

Special measures: monitoring of North Shore Health Academy

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 27 and 28 June 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, including 29 part lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the interim executive principal, vice-principal, the Chair of the Governing Body and other key staff. Meetings were also held with groups of students. Observations of teaching focused largely on those staff continuing employment with the academy next term. Students' conduct was observed around the academy and at break times.

Inspectors also scrutinised the academy's records for the safe recruitment and vetting of staff and checked that the academy is meeting statutory requirements in respect of safeguarding.

Context

Shortly after the inspection in January 2012 the principal left the academy. The vice-principal took on the role of acting principal for approximately one term. In April an experienced headteacher was appointed as interim executive principal along with an interim executive vice-principal. There remains significant disruption to staffing. Only 52% of the current staff team are planned to be in post at the start of the next academic year following a restructure in March 2012. Ministers have approved the appointment of a new sponsor and this is expected to take place in time for the start of the next academic year.

Achievement of students at the academy

Academy data and examination results from early GCSE entries in English and mathematics indicate that fewer students are on track to achieve five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, than in 2011. The proportion of students predicted to make expected progress is also likely to be significantly low. The academy is aware that it will not meet the current government floor standards by some significant margin. If predictions are accurate, it would mean that over 120 students will leave the academy without five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics.

In lessons, students' progress remains too variable and was judged to be good or better in approximately a third of observations. There are still too many lessons in which students make inadequate progress. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain a significant concern. Although there is some indication of the gap narrowing, boys are still not making as much progress as girls do and pupil premium students (those from low-income families who are currently known to be eligible for free school meals), are not doing as well as others. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are benefiting from improved teaching assistant support, but are still lagging behind their classmates.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving, but still has a long way to go before it is consistently good enough to ensure that all students make the progress expected of them. The number of lessons taught by supply teachers has reduced substantially. Students are particularly pleased about this, as it is ensuring a better consistency of provision. The academy has introduced an appropriate range of strategies to raise the quality of teaching and learning, including programmes to help students catch up with past weaker learning. Students say that lessons are more enjoyable because teachers are making work more interesting and engaging. Although Key Stage 4 lessons remain very examination-syllabus driven, some teachers are raising their expectations of the students. They are making a conscious effort to incorporate a range of different activities to try to maintain the students' interest.

An increasing number of teachers plan and deliver learning activities that are focused more on ensuring that students make good progress. Teachers are getting better at indicating the different needs of students and highlighting what good progress looks like for individuals. However, this is far from consistent across the academy. Nearly a third of lessons still fail to meet the needs and interests of different groups of students, especially those who have specific weaknesses in their literacy and numeracy skills. Learning is particularly poor in modern foreign languages. Some teachers are not ready to teach at the start of a lesson. For example, in some lessons observed the students were seated and waiting to be taught by the teacher who was still preparing for the lesson.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Staff, students and visitors state that there has been a tangible change to the 'feel' of the academy. The zero tolerance approach to poor behaviour implemented by the acting principal directly after the January inspection has resulted in the establishment of some key non-negotiable expectations of how students should behave. Consequently, students' behaviour is improving both in class and around the academy. Unlike at the previous inspection, there were no observed incidents of students being openly disrespectful to staff. Students have a better understanding of how their actions affect other people and there is a growing awareness of what type of behaviour is unacceptable, and why. Students appreciate that they now have clear boundaries and a system of rewards and sanctions that they understand. Nevertheless, there are still weaknesses in some students' attitudes to learning, but these are normally linked directly to the quality of teaching they receive. When students are not engaged by the task or the teacher's behaviour management is weak, they demonstrate limited listening skills, poor concentration and a swiftness to chat and fidget. Students spoken to overwhelmingly welcome the growing consistency in the way that teachers now implement the behaviour policy. They feel safer in school and say that bullying is reducing.

The number of exclusions is reducing, as is the proportion of students sent to the internal exclusion unit. Although improving, attendance is still much too low. Leaders have started to analyse why so many students do not attend and are beginning to seek the views of students in order to ensure that lessons are more appealing to them. There remains a core of students who are persistently absent and the academy is finding this difficult to shift. Similarly, although improving, punctuality remains a concern.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve students' behaviour and the impact this has on learning – good
- improve students' attendance – satisfactory

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The vision of the interim executive principal is shared throughout the leadership team and is firmly focused on raising students' attainment through improving the quality of teaching. Through his collaborative leadership approach, staff are beginning to work together in a more coordinated and collaborative way and have clear roles and responsibilities. Students welcome the opportunities to see the executive principal around the academy and believe he has their best interests at heart. Improvement plans are robust and focus on the appropriate actions needed to move the academy forwards. Middle leaders say that they are held more to account, but they are not monitoring the quality of teaching within their departments with sufficient rigour.

The governing body has been strengthened by the addition of an external adviser. Governors are asking tougher questions, but there is still not enough rigour in the way that they challenge leaders. The academy, with the assistance of the local authority, has identified a new lead sponsor to steer the academy out of special measures. Leaders are aware that there is still some way to go in building secure links with parents and carers.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- develop the academy's capacity to improve – satisfactory

External support

The statement of action submitted to Ofsted is fit for purpose and is driving improvement. The local authority and the current sponsor were successful in brokering the services of an external school improvement service to provide much needed support. The quality and impact of this support, along with that provided by the improvement partner are good.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards and ensure all students make at least the progress expected of them by relentlessly focusing on and evaluating the progress they make in every lesson.