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14 September 2012

Colette Singleton
Principal
The Sir Robert Woodard Academy
Upper Boundstone Lane
Lancing
BN15 9QZ

Dear Mrs Singleton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Following my visit with Michael Merva and Robin Gaff, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 12–13 September 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 second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2011. 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

The academy has appointed and is supporting three newly qualified teachers in geography and history. The appointment of further newly qualified teachers could be considered in some other departments as appropriate although there are no staff vacancies at present.

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, the Chair of the Interim Academic Board, and the Chair of the Woodard Trust.

Yours sincerely

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2011

- Raise attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 to at least in line with the national average by summer 2013, and secure better teaching that capitalises on recent significant improvements in behaviour and attitudes to learning, by:
 - ensuring that clear learning objectives drive appropriate activities in all lessons, and that these result in provision which suits students' needs
 - gauging students' understanding throughout a lesson, and continually using this feedback to adjust the pace and style of learning
 - developing the capacity of leaders at all levels to improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching
 - monitoring the quality of teaching rigorously and judging it accurately
 - involving students and their parents and carers in developing strategies to improve the quality of everyone's learning, and in monitoring the effectiveness of these strategies.

- Make effective use of performance data to improve achievement by:
 - ensuring that the information about the attainment of individuals and groups available to all middle and senior leaders is accurate, informative and easy to access and use
 - using this information to plan lessons that meet the needs of individuals and groups.

- Improve the effectiveness with which leaders in the academy work together to exert a strong and positive influence on the quality of learning, by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels work closely and coherently to clearly stated common objectives, continually monitor progress towards them, and work together to remove barriers to improving learning
 - strengthening the capacity of governing body to challenge and support the work of senior staff.

- Improve the progress made by students in the sixth form so that it is at least satisfactory across all subjects by summer 2013, by:
 - ensuring there is sufficient capacity in the senior team to lead the sixth form effectively
 - ensuring that teaching in the sixth form is good by autumn 2012.

Special measures: monitoring of The Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 12–13 September 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the work of the academy, examined information on students' performance, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other staff, groups of students, the Chair of the Interim Academic Board (IAB) and the Woodard Academy Partner from the Sponsor, Woodard Academies Trust.

Context

The Principal has continued with a programme of change and development of the academy staffing arrangements. A new management structure now includes the focused core senior group supported by a faculty team who manage department and subject leaders, along with six Chapter Heads who have responsibility for the pastoral and academic support of students. Several teachers have left and been replaced, and there are no staff vacancies at present.

The assignment of rooms within the new building has been reordered to bring together subjects into working areas in order to encourage more efficient use of the facilities and resources.

The IAB, established in January 2012 and now at full strength, continues to support and challenge the academy.

Achievement of students at the academy

A rigorous approach to the analysis of students' performance, accompanied by intensive support for individual students, is overturning the poor outcomes found at the time of the inspection. Over half of the Year 11 students taking the 2012 examinations gained five A*–C GCSEs including English and mathematics. This represented a narrowing of the gap with national outcomes and a significant improvement over poor results in previous years. There were some inconsistencies in the outcomes across individual subjects. In particular results were disappointing in history, food technology and science, but planning for improvement is already under way in these areas. The progress made by all students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, improved with over two thirds of the students making at least expected progress in English and mathematics. In other year groups, information provided by the academy and inspection lesson observations indicate that improving levels of performance are being maintained.

Students are now more confident learners as they are clearer about their targets and have a good understanding of how they can be achieved. Students' communication

skills are improving as teachers place a greater emphasis on literacy in different subjects. Lessons that are more closely geared to students' learning needs are creating a purposeful learning atmosphere and what students describe as a 'will to learn' in lessons.

The 2012 sixth form results also improved and over a third of students gained higher grades, confirming the accuracy of the academy's own internal assessments. A determination to improve the quality of teaching is supporting raising standards even further.

Progress since the last section monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 and secure better teaching – good
- improve the progress made by students in the sixth form – good.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve and the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is increasing. In the outstanding lessons observed, teaching was sharply focused on learning driven by clear objectives shared with the students so that everyone understood the point of the lesson. Teachers make much better use of targeted questioning techniques to ensure all students have an equal chance to contribute. Revised lesson planning strategies ensure that the needs of all groups are recognised and planned for in individual lessons. In practice the implementation of those plans is not consistently successful where teachers do not take sufficient account of individual needs.

Assessment is increasingly embedded into the everyday work of the academy. Progress is now checked regularly through assessments every six weeks that are closely moderated. The outcomes of these assessments are used to track both overall and individual performance. This information is shared with all staff and used in lesson planning. It is also shared with students so they know how well they are making progress towards their targets.

Progress since the last section monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- make effective use of performance data to improve achievement – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The calm and positive atmosphere found around the academy at the last visit continues. Students' behaviour reflects the developing optimistic ethos of the academy, and attendance and punctuality continue to improve. The new behaviour management strategies are evident in classrooms and staff are starting to use them effectively. As a result exclusions are rare, and students are clear about how they are expected to behave in lessons and how to keep themselves and others safe.

Older students interviewed during the inspection felt that they were part of a 'team effort' to improve their academy. They were clear about their targets and how well they were doing, but also said that they thought their work could be even more challenging. Younger students liked their new academy and appreciated the different subjects they were studying with their new teachers.

Sixth form students respond well to the improved teaching they are receiving. When given the opportunity they are able to engage in mature and sensible discussions that deal with contentious and sensitive issues. They continue to be good role models for the younger students.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The new Principal continues to focus successfully on the areas for development identified by the inspection through accurate self-evaluation and analysis. She is ambitious for the students and determined that they will achieve their best. This is recognised by the students, who appreciate her high-profile presence around the academy.

Middle leaders are much more confident in their roles, and appreciate their responsibilities and accountability for driving forward improvement in the academy. These are supported by rigorous performance tracking systems that are increasingly embedded in everyday working practices. The work of individual departments is also closely monitored, and plans have already been made to support those subjects where performance is not improving quickly enough. The IAB gives the academy and the staff crucial support through acting as an effective critical friend and challenging all concerned to keep improving.

Improvements to teaching and learning are supported by thorough planning and a programme of teacher training that is promoting a more consistent approach to helping students learn. Teachers feel well supported by this training. For example, newly qualified teachers appreciate the extra whole-staff development and training sessions that are available to them alongside the regular sessions with their mentors.

The academy continues to take good care of the students. All current safeguarding requirements are met and students are kept very safe. The review of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has been successful in promoting effective identification and tracking of their needs and ensuring that appropriate provision supports their learning.

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

- improve the effectiveness with which leaders in the academy work together to exert a strong and positive influence on the quality of learning – good.

External support

The sponsor continues to give the academy appropriate support, based on a clear grasp of the improvement priorities. The Woodard Academy Partner provides an individual link and is working through a range of issues with the staff. Feedback from this work has been significant in helping the academy to improve.

Support provided by the sponsor is developing the academy's own internal capacity to identify and address issues as they arise. As a result the staff team are becoming less reliant on external input, and are in a stronger position to give staff individual support as and when it is needed.