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1 February 2013

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 Karen Roche, Additional Inspector, and Alan Jarvis, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 30–31 January 2013, 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 third 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 the previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 [IAB], 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 third monitoring inspection on 30–31 January 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the work of the academy, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other staff, groups of students and parents, the Chair of the Interim Academic Board (IAB), the Woodard Academies Trust Academies Chief Officer, as well as telephone conversations with the Woodard Academy Partner and Chairmank of the Woodard Academies Trust.

Context

There have been no significant contextual changes in the academy since the previous visit.

Achievement of pupils at the school

While GCSE outcomes in 2012 did not quite reach teachers' high expectations, over half of the Year 11 students gained 5 GCSEs graded A* to C including English and mathematics. Although below the national average, this was a considerable improvement over recent outcomes. The senior leadership team accurately identified continued underperformance in science, history, food technology and geography. There are intensive support plans in place to help these subject areas improve. Current information provided by the academy and inspection evidence indicates that this support is effective in raising standards.

The progress made by all students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, while still below national average, continues to improve and the gaps with national outcomes are closing. This process is more rapid in English than in mathematics. Information provided by the academy, supported by inspection evidence, shows that expectations for other year groups, such as Year 10, remain high and their progress is accelerating. Rising achievement is supported by better behaviour for learning. Students clearly understand that they are expected to work hard and learn in their lessons, and that they will get better support to achieve their targets if they experience problems.

Standards in the sixth form rose in 2012 and the progress students are now making continues to improve. Admissions to the sixth form fell in Sept 2012, resulting in a very small Year 12 cohort. Applications for 2013 have increased dramatically, including more applicants from other schools than in previous years.

Progress since the last 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

Improvements in teaching continue. Many teachers now use a wider range of strategies to engage the students in learning. The pace of learning is improving but is still too slow when teachers talk too much and over-direct the lessons. Better use of assessment supports improvement. Students are more aware of their targets and the subject assessment criteria. They are increasingly confident in using these criteria to assess their own work and that of others. Teachers' marking is improving but students do not always respond adequately to the feedback and advice they are given.

Students are making better progress, especially at GCSE level. Underachievement is identified more promptly and support put in place. Parents acknowledge that this is helping their children to improve. Teachers are making better use of this information to plan lessons which challenge students appropriately. Nevertheless, lessons sometimes do not challenge the most able. This is often because teachers still do not always take enough notice of what students already know and so pitch the lesson at too low a level. Teachers are using a much wider range of strategies, such as using mini whiteboards, to check on progress during lessons and then adapting their teaching to meet changing student needs as the lesson progresses. The planning, preparation and use of high-quality resources are more effective in ensuring that students of all abilities can access their learning. This is often accompanied by tasks that are adapted to different needs, such as in a geography lesson where students were researching child soldiers using worksheets adapted to meet their individual needs.

There is a greater emphasis on developing students' literacy skills. A good focus on subject-specific vocabulary was seen in several lessons and in students' workbooks, although this was not consistent in all lessons.

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

Behaviour in lessons continues to improve as teaching gets better and the students enjoy a more varied and interesting range of activities. Students feel that behaviour is improving and that they are all more interested and involved in their learning, with few lessons disturbed by other students misbehaving. They say that everyone is

taking greater care of the academy community and, for example, there is less litter around the site.

When asked about bullying, students were sure that it happened less frequently and, when it did occur, it was rapidly dealt with by staff. Improvements in behaviour were confirmed by lesson visits and by the parents. Older students have a very positive view about the improvements and are much happier in their academy life, especially since September 2012. Younger students were happy in their classes and would recommend the academy to other young people. Sixth form students are becoming more responsible members of the community as they take on leadership roles such as acting as student ambassadors and giving support to younger students in lessons. They also make a valuable contribution to assemblies for other year groups.

The quality of leadership and management of the academy

The determination of the Principal and her team that students will achieve their best has resulted in rising standards as students make better progress. The management of teaching and learning is increasingly effective in driving improvement. Leaders within the academy are now working closely together towards clearly stated objectives to improve the quality of education in all areas of the academy. The academy leadership team is rigorous in monitoring teaching and achievement so that weaknesses are rapidly identified. This is quickly followed by intense support for teachers and students so as to overcome barriers to success. Middle managers are gaining in confidence in leading their subject areas as they are more effective in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning and so have a clearer view of strengths and areas for improvement.

The IAB works in close partnership with academy staff and continually challenges the academy to improve. It has a clear understanding of the issues and how they are best dealt with. However, there are differences in perception between the IAB and representatives of the Trust concerning their particular roles within the academy and its development. These differences need to be clarified in order to sustain improvement. The responsibilities and accountabilities of governance are not clearly defined and understood by all concerned. The IAB has monitored progress toward the sponsor's statement of action for the academy, although this statement shows no further actions or strategic direction beyond December 2012, making it difficult to plan for the future.

Progress since the last 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 – satisfactory.

External support

External support provided by the Trust to help the academy improve is increasingly successful in many ways. The Woodard Academy Partner continues to be effective in supporting the academy team in working in a range of areas. The impact of support for developing teaching and learning in subjects has been variable. In particular, English is well supported and can demonstrate successful impact of an external consultant's work on raising achievement. In some other areas, such as mathematics, support has been less effective as it has not met the needs of the teachers and internal evaluations show there is more limited evidence of impact.