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Peter Midwinter
Principal
The Sir Robert Woodard Academy
Upper Boundstone Lane
Lancing
BN15 9QZ

Dear Mr Midwinter

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Following my visit with Andrew Lyons, Additional Inspector, and Genevieve Usher, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 8–9 May 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 23 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since 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 and the Chair of the Woodard Academies 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 8–9 May 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the work of the academy, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other staff, groups of students, the Woodard Academies Trust Chief Officer and Trustees from the Woodard Academies Trust.

Context

Since the last visit, the interim Principal leading the academy has been replaced with a substantive Principal three weeks before this inspection. One teacher has left and been replaced. Four members of staff are on maternity leave, including a Vice-Principal. The interim academic board (IAB) is currently being replaced with an Academy Council that will form part of the permanent governance arrangements for the academy and report to the Woodard Academies Trust Board of Trustees who are the Governing Body

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Projected GCSE results in 2013 continue an improving trend. The percentage of students gaining five GCSEs graded A* to C including English and mathematics is expected to be higher than last year. Within this overall figure, there are differences in the outcomes for different groups of students. The performance of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is not improving as well as their peers. In particular, students receiving extra support through school action and school action plus are not gaining ground fast enough. A key factor in this slow improvement is their attendance, as too many of these pupils do not come to school regularly and the academy is not tackling this issue with sufficient rigour. For students eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) the gap between their achievement and that of their peers in the academy and nationally is closing. However, too many of these students also attend poorly and this hinders their achievement.

Students in Year 11 who are about to take their GCSE examinations are very positive about the way in which the academy has helped them to improve their achievement. They are particularly grateful for the extra sessions that have been organised outside of working hours, such as during the Easter holidays, and are clear that these have been a key factor in helping them to raise the standards of their work.

In the sixth form, analysis of student performance indicates that their achievement is improving. Teachers are making better use of information about students' attainment and progress to plan lessons which build on what they already know. However, this is not consistent enough across all subjects to support good progress.

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

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

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve, although the pace of change has slowed. There are examples of outstanding lessons where students are keen to learn and are excited by the subject material. Learning proceeds briskly in more lessons but there are still too many where the pace of teaching and learning are too slow, with the result that students become bored and drift off task. Behaviour then deteriorates as students disengage with learning and off-task chatter increases. Older students said they get 'fed up' with others chatting while they are trying to work and teachers do not always intervene successfully.

The academy policy for using information about students' progress to support learning is becoming more established and used effectively by more teachers. More Teachers are becoming more skilled in planning for the different needs of their students. Their planning does not always meet individual needs, especially of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, so the gap in outcomes when compared to other students is not closing quickly enough. There are still some teachers who do not use the marking policy properly and the quality and frequency of marking is erratic. The academy is aware of the need to do more to promote students' literacy. A start has been made in English, where focused literacy programmes are about to be introduced. Whilst stronger leadership is now in place to establish literacy across the curriculum, literacy is not yet promoted widely enough across all subjects or in relation to students' oral skills as the first step in improving their wider literacy.

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

Make effective use of performance data to improve achievement – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students feel safe in the academy and are certain that the staff look after them well. They are particularly complimentary about the work of the Chaplain and say that they would readily consult him if they encountered a problem such as bullying. The standard of behaviour in lessons continues to be linked to the quality of teaching. Where lessons are lively and interesting, students are keen and eager to learn. They work well, both on their own and in groups with other students. Lively discussions and debate contribute to good learning, and

students deal with controversial topics such as the globalisation of crime in a mature and sensible manner. Where teachers spend too much time talking at the students, their interest wanes and off-task behaviour results. Behaviour outside of lessons around the academy is can vary. Most students are sensible, calm and enjoy socialising with others. A minority are not well behaved and make life difficult for others.

The attendance of some students has declined recently and more are persistently absent from the academy. The strategies used by the academy to monitor and track absence are not effective enough in improving attendance.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The new Principal has worked hard in his short time in post to maintain a calm atmosphere in the academy as the community adjusts to the different leadership. Staff were initially unsettled by the change but now feel positive about the situation and say they are ready to move forward in improving the academy.

The Principal is looking closely at the current leadership and management systems, with the intention of restructuring to increase efficiency and improve value for money. Faculty leaders are keen to make more impact and, while understanding this means increased accountability, appreciate the opportunities they are going to be given to be more creative and proactive in leading their teams. They, and subject leaders, are becoming more involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their areas through activities such as lesson observations. However, they are not yet independently driving improvement enough. The management of provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is currently under review as there is insufficient emphasis on ensuring that all these students make good progress.

Students' perceptions of the sixth form as a good place for further education are improving. Leadership of the sixth form is currently changing and the academy is working hard to build on what has been established and ensure that there is sufficient capacity to lead the sixth form effectively.

Recruitment for the Academy Council is underway, to be complete by the end of May 2013. The Woodard Academies Trust is responsible for the governance of its academies currently overseeing the monitoring of the academy and holding leaders to account for a development plan which sets suitable goals 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

The Trust has arranged a suitable programme of support that continues to help the academy to improve. External consultants have had a positive impact on the leadership and management of some faculties, while other departments have benefited from visits to other schools to observe good classroom practice. The impact of this support on classroom practice is contributing to improvement as teachers become more aware of the need to develop their skills, with a focus on improving learning.

Additional priority

Following the inspection the academy is asked to add the following to the areas of its work for which improvement is required:

Improve the attendance of all students, especially disabled students and those who have special educational needs, in order to raise their achievement.