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12 July 2013

Mr W E Jordon CBE
Executive Principal
North Shore Academy
Junction Road
Stockton-on-Tees
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TS19 9LT

Dear Mr Jordon

Special measures: monitoring inspection of North Shore Academy

Following my visit with Peter Harrison Additional Inspector to your school on 10 and 11 July 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 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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 and the Corporate Director Children Education and Social Care for Stockton-on-Tees.

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 Academy

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 July 2013

Evidence

The inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive principal, vice-principal, five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the academy sponsor and other key staff. Formal and informal discussions were also held with students. A total of 24 lessons were observed; some observations were conducted jointly with four senior leaders.

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

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection there have been several changes to the staffing of the academy. In total, 12 staff have left including three subject leaders and a deputy vice-principal. Eight staff have been appointed, including new leaders of learning for English and humanities. The academy moved into new purpose-built premises in April 2013.

Achievement of students at the academy

Academy data and inspection evidence indicate that more students are making the progress expected of them in English and mathematics and in several other subjects. This is due, in part, to better teaching and improved attendance. Currently, 42% of students have already achieved at least a grade C in mathematics which is a significant improvement on previous years. Although the amount of progress students make is improving overall and particularly in English, outcomes in 2013 are predicted to show that the proportion making expected progress in mathematics will be significantly below the national picture. The overall proportion of students making more than expected progress is likely to improve but still be below national figures. Leaders forecast that achievement in 2014 will be much better.

Students' achievement in lessons is improving. As the quality of teaching becomes more consistent, the progress students make becomes more sustained. Occasionally, even when the quality of teaching is securely good, students make progress that requires improvement because of the gaps in their prior knowledge, understanding and skills. In a small number of lessons, the most-able students were not making enough progress because the work presented to them was too easy. As a result of the 'nurture' classes, less-able students, disabled students and those with special educational needs continue to make better progress than previously. The current system for setting initial targets for students' progress results in the vast majority of those known to be eligible for free school meals being set lower targets than other students. This anomaly is being addressed by leaders.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving at a faster rate than previously. The support programmes for teachers who deliver lessons that are less than good is working well. The proportion of teaching deemed to be outstanding is said to have nearly doubled. The support plans are now being managed by subject leaders and this is resulting in more bespoke training plans for staff. Consequently, specific areas for improvement are being tackled and more staff are teaching good lessons. Nonetheless, during the inspection, only one outstanding lesson was seen and too much teaching still required improvement.

The open-plan nature of the new building is aiding the sharing of ideas and there is more strategic joint planning within subjects. This is also evident in the increased deployment and effectiveness of teaching assistants. Teachers that have previously not responded positively to the support programmes have either improved or moved on. Consequently, the much needed reduction in the amount of teaching that was inadequate has been achieved.

Lesson planning continues to have students' progress at its heart. However, not all teachers are skilled at providing measurable progress points in a lesson and instead just list the activities to be undertaken. Not all teachers match the work to the specific needs of the students within lessons. Teachers are better at making the work more appropriate for the least able students but are not all as accomplished in matching work to challenge the most able. In several lessons, the highest attainers wasted time doing work that was too easy for them before moving on to the really difficult work. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching continues on its journey of improvement with greater vigour.

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

- improve the quality of teaching – good

Behaviour and safety of students

The consistency with which teachers expect students to behave in lessons and around the school has improved. All staff have high expectations of how students should behave and students say that teachers now use the behaviour management policy consistently. In turn, students are behaving much better and have more positive attitudes to their learning and their environment. Consequently, they are learning more. Students show a greater sense of pride, fostered not least by their appreciation of the new building. They really value the investment that has been made in providing them with a state-of-the-art environment. Internal and external exclusions have reduced and the reasons for students being removed from lessons have become less serious as the rigour of higher expectations kicks in. Staff point out that students' listening skills have improved as a result of the open-plan classrooms. The amount of off-task chatter in lessons has reduced as students focus more on the better quality activities.

The academy has been extremely successful in analysing the reasons for poor attendance and ensuring that policies to raise attendance are implemented robustly. Students' views have been canvassed and leaders have acted upon these views. Leaders have taken strong action to ensure persistent absence is reduced. As a result of the success of the initiatives, students' attendance and punctuality have made exceptional improvement particularly in relation to those students who are persistently absent. The number of persistent absentees has reduced from 20% to 5% and is now comfortably below the national average.

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

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

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The highest expectations, expertly modelled by the Principal, remain and more teachers are stepping up to the plate to improve their performance. The transition to the new building was excellently orchestrated and resulted in a seamless move with no tangible disruption to learning. The rigour of the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and the bespoke professional development offered to teachers and teaching assistants continues to have a significant impact on the overall quality of teaching.

Middle leaders have really upped their game. They are a cohesive group and are thriving on the extra responsibility and autonomy they now have in managing the performance of their departments. More of them model the best quality of teaching and they are becoming much more accurate in their judgements. They rigorously manage the support programmes for the teachers requiring improvement. They are using the improved data more effectively to target intervention programmes in Key Stage 3 rather than just in Year 11.

The governing body is much improved. The Chair of the Governing Body has ensured that governors understand their roles and responsibilities and their match of skills and expertise to their role is first-rate. As 'portfolio holders', governors understanding of students' academic performance, attendance and the quality of teaching they receive is far more secure. As a result, they are holding leaders, at all levels, much more to account and the level of challenge is much greater.

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

- develop the academy's capacity to improve – good

External support

The support provided by Northern Education Trust is valued by staff. It is matched well to the key areas requiring external expertise and is clearly helping to improve the academy. The support in improving governance is particularly noteworthy.