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Elizabeth Redpath
Principal
East Point Academy
Kirkley Run
Lowestoft
Suffolk
NR33 0UQ

Dear Mrs Redpath

Special measures monitoring inspection of East Point Academy

Following my visit with Rachel Hobson and Ian Starling, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 15 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2013. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The academy may appoint up to two newly qualified teachers of mathematics, English or science before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that none is inadequate and most is good by:
 - extending recently introduced procedures to train teachers and develop good practice across all departments
 - monitoring how well all teachers plan different tasks matched to students' needs and abilities, and measuring the impact this has on students' learning and progress
 - showing teachers how to use the 100 minutes of time available in each lesson to maintain students' interest and engagement, and accelerate their progress
 - checking that all teachers set students targets for improvement and regularly mark students' books to see if they are meeting their targets and know what to do to improve further.

- Raise the achievement of all students in all subjects, including those taught off-site, by:
 - embedding the recently introduced procedures to systematically monitor students' progress so that staff have a clear, up-to-date view of each student's performance, especially those eligible for support through the pupil premium, those who are disabled or have special educational needs and students that are taught off-site
 - broadening the curriculum to improve students' learning and progress in literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 3, and providing older students with a wider choice of qualifications and awards suited to their abilities and interests
 - improving the quality of provision and monitoring of students' progress in science.

- Improve students' behaviour and attendance by:
 - gaining greater consistency in how all teachers manage students' behaviour in lessons
 - strengthening procedures to monitor the attendance and welfare of students taught off-site
 - enhancing the rewards given to students for good behaviour and regular attendance
 - ensuring that all students are confident that staff will resolve the concerns they raise about bullying.

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers, and build further capacity to improve by:
 - reorganising the roles of senior leaders so that all of them have clear responsibilities for raising achievement
 - strengthening subject leadership, especially in science and in those subjects where students' attainment and progress are not high enough

- adding interim, measurable targets at key points to the improvement plan to accurately gauge the impact the academy is having on preparing all students for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 15 January 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting principal, other senior and middle managers, and a group of teachers. In addition, inspectors observed lessons on 30 occasions, 10 of which were observed jointly with a senior member of staff. Inspectors scrutinised academy improvement documents and met with the chair of the improvement board and representatives from the academy's sponsor. Inspectors talked informally with many individuals and small groups of students around the school at break times.

Context

The principal was not present for the monitoring visit. An associate principal is currently acting as principal and is being supported by the regional director of education for the academy chain sponsors. The process of reorganisation of senior staff is almost complete. Three senior leaders have left and been replaced by middle leaders. A new associate principal has been appointed with responsibility for teaching and learning. A head of science has now been appointed.

The previous management board has been dissolved following an external review of leadership and management. A new, smaller, board is now chaired by the regional director of education.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the last inspection further details of the 2013 examination results have been published. These results refer to the Year 11 students who were about to take GCSE examinations at the last inspection, and they confirm many of its findings.

For that particular year group, as reported by the last monitoring visit, overall GCSE results dropped slightly. Variations between individual subjects were considerable with students performing well in a few. For example, results in science were weak, but in media and French they exceeded national averages by a considerable margin.

Overall progress was slower than that expected when compared to similar schools, especially for students for whom the academy received extra funding through the pupil premium. Boys made slower progress than girls. Results were much more positive for the relatively large groups of students who enter the academy with low prior attainment. This group made more rapid progress than their peers and that expected for similar students nationally. The significant number of students supported by school action did particularly well.

Since these data were published achievement has improved. At Key Stage 3, early indications are that standards are rising and students in all year groups are making at least the progress expected of them. The gap between those for whom the school receives funding through the pupil premium and their peers is closing at Key Stage 3 with early signs of improvement at Key Stage 4. A similar pattern of improvement is seen in the gaps between the achievement of boys and girls. These improvements were confirmed by classroom observations of learning. More students are now working with a more purposeful attitude in class.

The academy has tackled issues of low literacy on entry with determination. Good early evaluation of students' needs is followed by effective intervention and support. As a result these pupils make faster progress than their peers. Support for literacy throughout Key Stage 3 has improved since the last monitoring visit, and this is particularly noticeable in the marking of written work throughout the academy.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve. The proportion of lessons in which inspectors judged teaching to be good has risen. Inspectors saw a small number of lessons where teaching was outstanding, and a very small number in which learning was judged to be inadequate.

Responsibilities for the oversight and development of teaching practice have been changed and an experienced manager now has oversight of the improvement of this area. The academy has, rightly, prioritised teacher development. This has taken the form of structured programmes in which the best teachers coach those who are new to the school, or whose practice needs to be improved. The sharing of best practice is being used effectively as a teaching improvement tool, and is valued by teaching staff.

In class many more students work with quiet confidence, using the knowledge and understanding that they have gained to tackle new problems. In part, this is because many teachers have higher expectations than at the last monitoring visit. In the best examples seen, teachers are confident enough to adapt lessons to match learning, sometimes moving away from lesson plans where necessary, for example when students have understood and are ready to move on. These encouraging changes are resulting in improved behaviour in class because more students are interested in what they are doing. Students, when questioned, said that lessons are calmer and less likely to be interrupted.

Despite these improvements some teachers are reluctant to raise expectations in class further or to a level where the most able students are suitably stimulated. The lack of specific, more demanding work for this group means that they do not always achieve their full potential.

Assessment is now used well. Teachers and most students have an accurate view of how well they as individuals are achieving. Teachers are increasingly using this information to plan lessons and support for those who need it. Most assessments are accurate, though some overgenerous assessment was noted in mathematics, especially at the higher levels.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The academy has sharpened its monitoring of attendance considerably. Rewards and sanctions are now clearly understood. Effective work with some parents has reduced the number of students who are persistently absent. Attendance is now close to the national average with an improving trend. Persistent absence has reduced from unacceptably high levels at the time of the last inspection and is now close to that seen in similar schools. Punctuality has improved. Students are attending better because they are increasingly valuing and enjoying their time at the academy. In lessons, teachers are managing poor behaviour better. Students state that this is because teachers are applying the academy's behaviour policy with greater consistency.

Despite these improvements in lessons, inspectors observed pockets of immature behaviour in corridors and open spaces during breaks, often involving older students. Inspectors noted a general lack of supervision at these points of the day.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The rate of improvement of the academy has increased. Leadership is improving. Staff support recent changes to the management structure. They are very clear that the pace of improvement has accelerated in the relatively short period since the last monitoring visit. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the academy's weaknesses and strengths. Links with outstanding academies within the chain have developed further since the last monitoring visit. The sharing of best practice between institutions is increasingly well developed.

The restructuring of senior management is now almost complete. Responsibilities and accountabilities have been clarified and defined further. The management of performance is now developing quickly. Targets are more precise and progress towards them better monitored, both for individuals and the whole academy. Teachers and managers now have a clearer understanding of the performance that is expected of them. In part, this is responsible for the improvements seen in teaching.

The academy has put more effort and resources into the improvement of teaching. Training has been extensive and effective. Managers can point to examples of teachers whose practice has improved significantly because of this. Managers now frequently drop in to lessons or undertake more formal observations. These are

accurate in their conclusions and closely linked to the further development of those observed. The academy is less reliant on temporary teachers.

Middle leaders' roles have been clarified and strengthened. They have a greater responsibility for the teaching and learning in their sections, and are accountable for the success of their students. Curriculum planning is taking place in all areas of the academy, and some notable changes have already been implemented. The length of lessons has been reduced to one hour from 100 minutes, and Year 11 core subjects are now taught in the mornings. This is having a positive impact on attendance. Shorter lessons have led to less time wasting. The curriculum for those pupils who enter the school with low literacy levels or who have special educational needs has been improved. The impact is already showing in the faster progress made by these students.

The new management board challenges the academy more effectively. As was the case with the previous management board, however, these challenges have not been recorded in a way that allows precise monitoring of progress towards targets or whether actions have been completed.

External support

The academy sponsor has provided increased support since the last monitoring visit. In addition to specialist advice and guidance in mathematics and English, help and training have been provided to assist changes to the curriculum. Extensive teacher training and development programmes have been implemented and supported. Support to further develop provision for students with special educational or literacy needs has been provided.

Priorities for further improvement

- Quickly finalise the reorganisation of senior staff.
- Tackle the gap in achievement between those for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium and their peers.
- Improve challenge and provision for the most able.
- Raise expectations for behaviour outside classes and monitor it.