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Mrs D Tomasz and Mr D Flowitt
Executive co-Headteachers
Goole High School Academy of Excellence
Centenary Road
Goole
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Dear Mrs Tomasz and Mr Flowitt

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Goole High School Academy of Excellence

Following my visit to your academy with Nell Banfield and Darren Stewart, Additional Inspectors, and Jacqui O' Connor, Ofsted shadow, on 25 - 26 June 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 which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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's statement of action is now fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Board of Directors, the Director of Children, Family and Schools for the East Riding of Yorkshire and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in all subjects from Years 7 to 13 so that it is consistently good or better and accelerates the rate of progress of all groups of students, by ensuring that:
 - information about the levels at which students work is used carefully to plan activities that challenge them accurately, interest them and enable them to reach their potential
 - teaching builds up students' knowledge, understanding and skills, so that they broaden their learning and can apply what they know
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of the quality and quantity of students' work, including very regular opportunities to write at length, and in presentation, spelling and grammatical accuracy
 - development of students' literacy and numeracy are consistently incorporated into all learning, based on a whole-school policy that all staff follow.

- Improve students' behaviour, attitudes to learning and attendance throughout the academy, including that of sixth-form students, by making sure that:
 - all staff have high expectations of students' behaviour and attitudes to learning, supported by consistent use of the behaviour policy
 - all students understand the link between attendance and progress and the importance prospective employers give to good attendance
 - all students have individual attendance targets, which are constantly reviewed, with a minimum target of 95%
 - all staff fully understand the link between the quality of teaching and students' attitudes to learning and ensure that teaching engages students and motivates them.

- Urgently strengthen the impact of leadership and management across the academy in supporting good achievement, by ensuring that:
 - leaders at all levels have full accountability for the impact of their individual responsibilities on the quality of teaching, students' achievement and behaviour, and check their impact regularly and rigorously
 - careers information, education and guidance is planned carefully across the academy to enable students to develop the necessary knowledge to make informed choices about their future, and skills in preparing for the world of work, including work experience
 - the governing body has a full and accurate understanding of the performance of the academy so that it is able to hold leaders fully to account

An external review of governance should be undertaken, to include a specific focus on the impact of pupil premium spending, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance can be improved. Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the academy.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 25-26 June 2014

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, other academy leaders and four representatives from the proposed sponsor. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) also met with the Chair and vice-chair of the Board of Directors. Documents, including: the amended statement of action; reviews of progress against areas for improvement; and records of student progress and the quality of teaching were evaluated. HMI and additional inspectors also visited 25 lessons, spoke with students and teachers about their work, examined the work in students' books and observed students' behaviour at social times and between lessons. Inspectors carried out several joint lesson observations with the academy's leaders.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection, several staff have either resigned or are leaving as their contracts have ended and several appointments have been made to replace them. The director of English post has been filled and an assistant headteacher with responsibility for leading teaching for learning and progress has taken up his post. The director of mathematics post remains vacant as does the English coordinator role. One governor has left, two new ones have been elected and there is one vacancy. The Wakefield City Academy Trust (WCAT) is supporting the academy's improvement under an agreement with the Department for Education (DfE). A member of the WCAT leadership support team with headship experience has been seconded to the academy for five days each week. The headteacher of Wakefield City Academy is also seconded to the academy for two days each week while the chief executive officer from WCAT is acting as executive headteacher. During the inspection, students in Years 7, 10, 11 and 13 were not in the academy and 54 other students were involved in off-site events.

Achievement of pupils at the school

It was not possible during this inspection to evaluate fully students' achievements throughout the academy due to the absence of several year groups. HMI will focus and report more extensively on this aspect at the next monitoring inspection. However, from the limited sample available inspectors found evidence of achievement that varied widely within year groups and subjects, and between different groups of students.

The academy's latest progress data indicate a general improvement and a narrowing of the deficits that existed between the proportions of Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 students who are on track to make or exceed at least expected progress relative to their starting points. The caveat is whether or not these data are reliable; the academy's 2014 published exam results will be available by the time of the next monitoring inspection. However, it is already clear that underneath this veneer of rising achievement, there remain concerns at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 about

the progress of groups, such as those who speak English as an additional language, those known to be eligible for free school meals or those who are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding), boys and students with special educational needs. Similarly, at Key Stage 5, students' success in certain courses is lamentable and requires urgent attention.

The quality of teaching

The academy's latest monitoring records indicate that 58% of teaching is now good or better, which they argue is exemplified by students' improving rates of progress. Inspectors' own scrutiny of wide-ranging evidence indicates that there is an unacceptably wide gulf between the least and most effective teaching, expectations of what students are capable of, and marking and feedback. Literacy is inconsistently developed and numeracy is underdeveloped across the curriculum and while policies may exist, they are not being adhered to routinely. This is also true of students' pride in their work, engagement in learning, spelling and grammatical accuracy. At times, some of these skills are poorly modelled by staff. The Year 7 project-based learning approach has had a positive effect on the targeted students' writing and oral communication skills. The challenge facing the academy is to iron out the variability in the impact of teaching on students' learning that exists in many subjects and for several groups of students as a matter of urgency.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Overall, students' attendance continues to rise and the numbers of students who are persistently absent are falling due to the success of improvement strategies in place. However, the attendance of sixth form students is particularly low. Students known to be eligible for free school meals are twice as likely to be regularly absent than other students. Both these aspects need tackling as matters of urgency. Punctuality was too variable during this monitoring inspection.

Students' behaviour is on an upward curve as: raised expectations; more consistency in behaviour management; some bespoke support packages for targeted students; and more effective teaching, begin to take effect. This is reflected in a decline in the need for assistance in classrooms, detention and exclusion rates, and some indications of more effective learning and progress across the academy. Generally, in the lessons visited and at social times, students acted suitably and had positive attitudes to learning, to each other and to staff. However, this was not always the case and varied greatly when students were not engaged by the teaching, or their inappropriate behaviour was not challenged by staff. Behaviour is also in need of improvement in certain 'blind spots', such as the boys' toilets. Some staff have had training to help reinforce the importance of consistent behaviour management and the link between good teaching and student motivation.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The academy's leaders continue to present as determined and industrious. There are some indications, reflected by the apparent improvements in each of the priority areas, that their impact is starting to increase. The academy has employed more experienced teachers and leaders who they hope will have a more effective impact on students' learning and progress. Leaders also continue to have success in raising expectations of students' good behaviour and attendance. However, the status quo appears heavily reliant on the intervention of WCAT. Going forward, the academy's leaders will have to ensure that they are able to demonstrate unequivocally their impact. There are also some big questions that need to be resolved around the sixth form and its viability. The accountability restructure has not yet taken place and current systems remain overcomplicated and lack clarity. Time will judge the wisdom and effectiveness of the major impending changes to the curriculum, assessment, teaching and appraisal procedures, but it is clear solutions urgently need to be found to reverse the inadequate impact of these aspects over time.

Leaders must ensure rigorous and regular monitoring and evaluation take place and are used to inform subsequent improvements in outcomes and provision for students. Careers information, education and guidance provision has been revised to ensure students develop the skills to make informed choices about their futures. However, more could be done to ready students for the changing demands of study as they move through the key stages in the academy.

Following the judgment at the first monitoring inspection, the academy has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose. It has also created a whole-academy development plan that incorporates all areas of its work and not just those identified as weaknesses by the last section 5 inspection.

Governors have reacted positively to the gauntlet thrown to them to improve their strategic challenge and influence. They have bolstered their ranks with members with applicable skills in education, finance and employment law. The external review of governance has taken place and the key recommendations embraced, including: working with staff to reaffirm and embed the academy's 'mission'; clarifying the governance structure; increasing their capacity to be more discerning and hold leaders rigorously to account by seeking training and development opportunities; and ensuring that they deploy themselves suitably, relative to their talents. To these ends, governors have already undergone training, including in the use of data. They have undertaken a skills audit and have met with well-regarded governing bodies from within the WCAT trust to learn from them. Governors also plan to institute focus groups linked to the academy's key priority areas so that they can call staff to account and be better informed about relative progress towards milestone targets.

The major caveat alongside the '*green shoots*' of improvement is that none of it is securely embedded and the gains remain fragile. Several initiatives will not be in place before September 2014 and others were launched only recently. This means staff have not had time to establish a firm routine encompassing the non-negotiable

modes of operation being demanded by the academy's leaders. Also, much training is yet to be undertaken which will be vital to the successful roll out of these new procedures. It remains the case that the pace of improvement and the impact of leadership must improve manifestly if the academy is to be removed from special measures within the prescribed timescales.

External support

The major intervention of WCAT into every facet of the academy's work, especially, leadership, students' achievement and the quality of teaching, has been welcome and necessary. Having initially assessed the scale of the task, WCAT has been decisive and liberal in deploying their specialist school improvement team, both at a strategic and operational level. The focus has been on advising, guiding and modelling effective practice and systems in each of the priority areas. They are also making available to the academy the collective expertise and experience of WCAT staff regarding good practice in curriculum, assessment and appraisal arrangements. WCAT's involvement has added extra leadership capacity and additional momentum, urgency, and direction to the academy's improvement journey. It has also had a stabilising influence, with some potential conflict skilfully averted.

Sponsor arrangements are yet to be finalised by the DfE.