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22 September 2014

Mrs Angela Hull
Principal
Outwood Academy Foxhills
Foxhills Road
Scunthorpe
Lincolnshire
DN15 8LJ

Dear Mrs Hull,

Special measures monitoring inspection of Outwood Academy Foxhills

Following my visit with Graeme Clarke, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 18 and 19 September 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 inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014. 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.

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 published 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.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Storey

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2014

- Improve teaching to good or better by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - raising teachers' expectations as to what students can achieve
 - planning lessons which ensure that students of all abilities make more rapid progress and achieve highly
 - improving marking and the advice given to all students, so that they know what they have done well, are shown how to improve their work and by making sure that teachers check that these improvements have been made.

- Raise attainment and ensure that all groups of students make good progress in all subjects by:
 - improving the standards of students' reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills
 - improving students' attitudes to learning and ensuring that they work hard and quickly in every lesson and take care over the presentation of their work
 - challenging students, particularly the most able in every lesson, so that they are encouraged to think for themselves and to produce work of a high quality
 - keeping careful checks on the progress of all individuals and groups who are not making the progress they should and by providing the help they need to catch up in their work.

- Make sure that leadership and governance are effective by:
 - taking actions to ensure that all senior and subject leaders develop the skills necessary to improve the quality of teaching and accelerate students' progress
 - establishing secure arrangements so that governors can hold senior and subject leaders to account for the impact of their work
 - taking the necessary actions so that the range of subjects and courses provided, particularly at Key Stage 4, successfully prepare students for future study, training and employment
 - ensuring efficient management of the academy's finances so that its accommodation is fit for purpose and staff and resources are used to best effect in driving up standards
 - undertaking an external review of governance and of the academy's use of the pupil premium in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 to 19 September 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work and met with the Principal, the executive Principal, other senior and middle leaders in the academy, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed lessons, four were observed jointly with members of the academy's senior leadership team. They scrutinised a range of documents including the academy's analysis of recent external examination results and data concerning students' current attainment and progress. Attendance and behaviour data were scrutinised, as were records that monitored the quality of teaching.

Context

The Principal is new to the academy from September 2014 and some roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team have been revised. The governing body has been reconstituted following the school formally joining the Outwood Grange Academies Trust on 1 September 2014. However, the former Chair of the Governing Body remains, providing important continuity. Nine new staff joined the academy in September. The academy employs five newly qualified teachers and three staff who are training to be teachers. Significant building work has taken place since the last monitoring inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Data from 2014 examination results show significant improvement in students' attainment and progress. These data demonstrate that the overall standard of students' reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills is being raised. Indications are that in 2014, 42% of Year 11 students achieved the five A* to C grades including English and mathematics measure at GCSE level, an increase of 18 percentage points from 2013 and 2 percentage points above the academy's target. Examination results show that standards in students' reading, writing and communication skills have improved more than their mathematical skills. This was evident in lessons where students' weak understanding of basic mathematics hindered their progress. Consistent strategies used in English lessons sharply focused students' attention on improving their basic literacy skills, but the same consistent emphasis was not given to improving students' basic understanding of number in mathematics lessons. Although attainment has risen overall, the academy has been less successful in narrowing gaps in the attainment and progress of students known to be eligible for free school meals and that of other students. These gaps have widened this year and are greater in mathematics than English. For disabled students and those with special educational needs, the attainment gap has narrowed this year. Academy tracking systems are now robust and make accurate predictions about students' attainment and progress. There is now a need for

teachers to use this information to ensure that they meet the needs of all students, especially the most able and those with English as an additional language.

Students are generally industrious and quickly settle to work, although occasionally students are disengaged from the task in hand and attitudes to learning are then less productive. The academy sets clear expectations concerning the presentation of students' work, which is bringing about improvement and ensuring that students take a greater pride in their work.

The quality of teaching

Very few instances of inadequate teaching were seen. Joint lesson observations with senior leaders showed that they have an accurate view of teaching quality across the academy. They know where the best practice lies and are beginning to use this to strengthen teaching that needs improvement by requiring teachers to attend specific training and put in place packages of support to improve practice. Teachers appreciate these opportunities to develop their skills. The additional capacity made available from the wider Outwood Grange Academies Trust enables more experienced practitioners to work alongside and advise newly appointed middle leaders so that they gain expertise and confidence. The addition of nine new teachers to the staff this September means that it is vital that governors and senior leaders maintain their close monitoring of the quality of teaching to ensure that further improvement takes place.

The academy has implemented a clear approach to lesson-planning and this has led to greater consistency. In some lessons, planning is mechanistic and does not build on students' prior knowledge and understanding sufficiently. The performance data teachers have at their disposal are not used to ensure that students of all abilities make rapid progress and achieve highly. Where learning is less than good, it is because teaching approaches do not successfully engage or enthuse students. Sometimes opportunities are missed to extend or probe students' understanding because of a rigid adherence to the lesson plan and this particularly restricts the progress of the most-able students.

Progress in improving marking and the advice given to all students is gathering pace. Where marking was most effective in helping students learn students knew what they have done well and how to improve their work. The academy has put in place a clear system that has been progressively implemented since the last monitoring inspection and this is now beginning to pay dividends. There is a clear expectation that students will respond to teachers' marking by correcting their work and following the advice for next steps. Where teaching is weaker this systematic approach is less rigorously applied and then students are unclear about how to make progress in their learning.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

A professional development programme is in place to develop middle leaders and improve the overall quality of teaching in the academy. This, together with clear systems and procedures, is raising expectations, improving morale and driving forward improvement. Students shared the view that the academy is now much improved. Following the reconstitution of the governing body, meetings are aligned with regular academy data collections and review points so that governors are able to gain a full picture of the academy's performance. However, these arrangements are very recent and time is needed to evaluate their full effectiveness. In addition, further work is required on the next phase of development-planning to ensure that improvements so far are embedded and emerging priorities are taken forward. It is particularly important to ensure that a strategic plan is in place to support the growing number of students who speak English as an additional language.

A sensible balance has been struck between 'quick fixes' in order to do the best for those students at Key Stage 4 at risk of not securing the qualifications necessary for the next steps in their education, and taking more considered actions in the longer term, so that a broad and balanced curriculum is implemented to promote better achievement. A broad and balanced curriculum is now in place for students in all year groups except the current Year11.

Considerable funding has been committed to ensure the academy's accommodation is fit for purpose. This is work in progress, with a further phase of development planned for November to provide more specialist accommodation, particularly in science.

External support

Outwood Grange Academies Trust is effectively supporting improvement and developing sustainable leadership capacity through a coaching and mentoring approach. Extensive additional resources have been provided to tackle weaknesses rapidly. Links have been maintained with the local authority, which is providing additional support, for example, for students who speak English as an additional language and to improve attendance. Creative approaches are being used to recruit highly effective teachers to fill vacancies, using the wider resources of the academy trust.