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10 October 2014

Ms Paula Ward  
Principal  
Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy  
Broad Way  
Pelsall  
Walsall  
WS4 1BW

Dear Ms Ward

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy**

Following my visit with Peter McKay and Clive Hurren, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 8 and 9 October 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 strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to 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, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Education Funding Agency, the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit, the Chief Executive of the Ormiston Academies Trust and the Director of Children's Services for Walsall.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to speed up the progress students make by:
  - setting tasks that are at the right level to get the best out of students, especially the most able
  - using questions in lessons that check students' understanding and develop in students the ability to think, reflect and communicate clearly
  - giving students clear and subject-specific feedback so that they know how to improve their work, and then making sure that students act upon this advice and guidance
  - providing opportunities for students to develop their literacy skills in all subjects, especially in writing.
  
- Improve students' achievement in mathematics by:
  - eradicating weaknesses in mathematics teaching
  - improving students' skills in carrying out calculations and their ability to use and apply number skills when solving problems
  - ensuring that students have opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other subjects.
  
- Ensure that all groups of students in the sixth form achieve well by:
  - checking students' progress more regularly and rigorously
  - reducing variations in students' progress through swift interventions to keep students on track
  - ensuring that teaching in the sixth form is consistently at least good across all subjects.
  
- Improve leadership and management, including governance by ensuring that leaders and governors:
  - have the skills and knowledge necessary to check the progress of all students accurately
  - communicate a greater sense of urgency by making sure plans to improve student progress are clearly focused on what will make the biggest difference to improving learning and teaching
  - incorporate into improvement plans some short- and medium-term milestones that can be used to measure success
  - regularly monitor the success of actions that have been put in place to raise standards, and challenge staff if progress falls below that which is expected
  - bring about rapid improvements in the learning and teaching of mathematics so that standards rise quickly and students make at least good progress
  - consistently make judgements on the quality of teaching that take into account how well students are making progress

- tackle weaknesses in the provision for students who are most able and for those who are eligible for support through the pupil premium
- frequently check to see if the spending of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up grants are raising standards for disadvantaged students and for those falling behind their peers in English and mathematics
- undertake an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium grant, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the academy.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 October 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work and visited parts of lessons, some of which were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors met with the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Chair of the Progress Board. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) met with an education adviser who is commissioned by the academy's sponsor, Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT). Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons and break times, and met with groups of pupils, including sixth form students, to discuss their views about the academy, their learning and the behaviour and safety of pupils. Inspectors took account of parents' views from the academy's surveys of their views. Seventy five staff inspection questionnaire responses were also reviewed. The academy's action plans and the impact of its actions were checked along with assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. An inspector checked the single central record to ensure that all new staff have been added and that the academy complies with statutory requirements in relation to staff vetting and disclosure procedures.

### **Context**

There has been a significant turnover of teaching staff since the last monitoring inspection in May 2014. Fifteen teachers have joined the academy and 12 have left.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

There is a mixed picture to report following the national test results for 2014, although for two consecutive years the academy has met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 4.

Achievement improved significantly in mathematics and science but the percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\* to C in English declined compared with the previous year. Nonetheless, an increasing proportion of pupils are making or exceeding the expected rate of progress in most year groups in English, mathematics and science, reflecting improvements to the teaching and more robust monitoring of pupils' progress and teachers' performance.

Accurate targets for pupils' attainment in English currently point to improvement compared with the disappointing national test results this year. The unvalidated test results are still being reviewed. As a result, the academy has received revised figures that show more students gaining GCSE grade C or above in English writing papers than was originally thought. The trend of improving standards is being sustained in mathematics and, from this year's science results, standards are improving rapidly in all disciplines of science.

The academy's leaders and staff have, rightly, prioritised extended writing as an area for improvement. Inspection findings show that the quality, form and structure

of pupils' writing across the academy are inconsistent. Standards in mathematics are improving and an increasing proportion of pupils are on course to make or exceed the expected rate of progress in relation to their starting points when joining the academy. However, in English, too few of the most able pupils are reaching the highest levels.

The achievement of students in the sixth form is improving well, reflecting a more consistent approach to checking work and progress and more effective teaching across subjects. The most recent test results show that the overall attainment of students who took both academic and vocational courses improved by half a grade on the previous year. This represents some accelerated progress in the last year because of improved teaching and stronger leadership.

The legacy of inadequate teaching in the past left most groups of pupils and individuals behind and with a lot of ground to catch up. Disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding, which in this academy is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority, were on average, a GCSE grade behind in English and mathematics. Inspection findings show that stronger and more consistently good teaching is narrowing this gap. More effective intervention programmes, such as the academy's Year 7 'catch-up' programme that focuses on improving pupils' core literacy skills, are accelerating pupils' progress.

Pupils who have additional learning needs benefit from some well focused support and intervention. Pupils with disabilities or who have special educational needs make reasonable progress towards reaching age-related levels in English and mathematics. Nonetheless, there are still instances where these pupils underachieve in lessons that do not challenge or support them sufficiently.

### **The quality of teaching**

Inspection findings show that lessons are increasing opportunities for pupils to ask questions and share ideas with other pupils that give them more confidence and self-assurance. Teachers are increasingly using assessments to plan lessons and tasks for pupils that build on their previous learning, although there are still lessons that lack sufficient challenge for the most able pupils.

Most lesson plans include details about pupils' expected learning targets but there remain many lessons where teachers and support staff do not extend or move pupils' learning on quickly enough to help them reach higher levels. This is more typically the case for the most able pupils because teachers do not leave sufficient time for them to work on one of the higher level learning objectives planned for each lesson.

In the most effective lessons, teachers make sure that there is sufficient pace and challenge to enable pupils to reach, for example, a higher level learning objective or what are described as 'HOT (Higher Order Thinking) targets'. In such lessons, questioning is sharp and focused and provides time for pupils to think for themselves

and learn through trial and error or experiment with ideas. Where learning requires improvement or is inadequate, the pace and challenge provided are insufficient so that pupils mark time or go over work that they have already covered. In such lessons, teachers ask leading questions that do not enable pupils to think deeply enough to extend their understanding.

Teachers are now providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length across a broader range of subjects. In most English lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to edit and improve their writing. This is a good improvement since the academy's inspection that placed it in special measures. In addition, teachers are providing a good range of homework and research for pupils to undertake and this has been welcomed by parents and carers as a positive move. However, workbooks show that pupils of average and higher ability make unnecessary spelling errors and the structure of writing, for example, when using paragraphs and the accuracy of spelling and grammar, vary considerably across the academy.

Teachers' marking has improved with sharper development points and opportunities for pupils to self-correct their work. However, there are instances where teachers praise poor quality writing so that pupils do not develop a clear understanding of how to improve their work or do not encourage pupils enough to use a broader range of vocabulary. In addition, pupils are not reading widely or often enough to broaden their language and use of vocabulary.

Teachers are improving pupils' achievement in mathematics. Pupils are now given more varied and challenging problem-solving tasks but the most able pupils should still be doing better. A concerted effort to improve basic numeracy skills is bearing fruit. Many pupils joining the academy were previously using inefficient methods of calculation to solve problems. In Key Stage 3 some skilled teaching and intervention work are starting to fill gaps in pupils' understanding so that pupils are applying their knowledge of multiplication and division facts to more complex operations and problems. In Key Stage 4, there is some consistently effective teaching which provides pupils of average ability and those capable of reaching high levels with more challenging tasks. There are, however, lessons that still do not offer the right level of challenge for all pupils.

The teaching in the sixth form is improving well. There is a good balance of individual tuition and instruction for students. Regular checks on their progress are being undertaken by teachers and lessons build on previous learning. There has been good progress in strengthening the teaching and the level of challenge, support and guidance being offered to sixth form students since the last inspection.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils appreciate the fact that adults value their contributions and are rewarded when they do well. They are encouraged by the most effective and vigilant staff to try even harder. When the teaching is less effective or demands less of them, pupils understandably lose interest or their attention wanders so they do less work.

On the whole, however, pupils are doing more, achieving better and their behaviour and attitudes to learning remain good. Pupils are keen to do well and are usually well behaved and attentive in lessons and at other times around the academy. The only lapses of concentration occur when teachers or classroom assistants do not expect enough of pupils or repeat what has already been learned.

The improvements to pupils' behaviour and learning, as well as the increased engagement with pupils through improved marking, have raised expectations. There is an energy and enthusiasm for learning in most lessons and pupils are much more involved and interested in their work. Workbooks are well presented and demonstrate that pupils are proud of their efforts and try hard to do their best.

Pupils are safe and there are good routines and vigilant supervision of pupils during changeover times between sessions. Pupils move around the academy safely and efficiently, usually turning up to lessons punctually and ready to learn. They are usually courteous to each other and to visitors and they treat resources and the academy environment with care.

Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and sixth form students reported to inspectors that bullying or incidents of intimidation are very rare and that the positive relationships they have with adults help the academy's community to work and socialise in harmony. The academy makes a significant contribution to pupils' well-being and personal development. There is clearly a commitment to promoting British values of fairness, democracy and equal opportunities, and respecting the diversity of faiths, customs, traditions and beliefs that exist across the United Kingdom.

Pupils like coming to the academy and this is reflected in improving attendance rates that are currently in line with the national average.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Since the last monitoring inspection in May 2014, the academy's leaders and the IEB have continued to build on the improvements reported at the time. There is now more well established and robust scrutiny of lessons and pupils' work; sharper evaluations of teachers' performance; more effective and accurate assessments; and some well judged appointments of key staff. These improvements have strengthened the quality of teaching and are having a positive impact on pupils' learning.

The Principal is resilient and determined. Since joining the academy shortly before the inspection that placed it in special measures, she has had to manage many complex and demanding staffing issues. In addition, very little teaching at the time of the last full inspection was of good or better quality and the planned curriculum was not appropriately organised to meet the full range of needs of pupils. To their credit, the principal and her senior leadership team have managed to cope with many demands to increase the level of scrutiny and challenge so that more is being expected of everyone throughout the academy's community. This determination and



ambition is bearing fruit, but leaders recognise that there is still much more to be done to address a legacy of pupil underachievement.

The support provided for teachers and classroom assistants, and the challenges presented to staff when judging their performance, are improving the way teachers plan their lessons and how they prepare for regular assessments of pupils' progress and performance. A stronger and more focused senior leadership team has been established with clear roles and responsibilities. In addition, middle leaders are playing an increasingly active part in improving teaching and learning in their respective areas of responsibility and departments.

The distribution of leadership across key stages and departments is leading to more proactive involvement in the academy's improvement by staff at all levels of responsibility. The staff survey results show that morale is high and the vast majority of teachers and support staff are pulling together in a concerted effort to raise standards and improve teaching. New appointments of effective and experienced leaders and teachers with good track records have already strengthened the teaching. The IEB and its appointed Progress Board (PB), established by the sponsor Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT), are starting to secure a platform for more sustained improvement to teaching. There are now good or outstanding teachers leading improvement across each phase of the academy and a greater sense of urgency in identifying poor practice in order to eliminate inadequate teaching or that which still requires improvement. These combined efforts of senior and middle leaders provide a firm foundation from which to monitor and support teaching in every class and is building further leadership capacity for more sustained improvement.

There are challenging targets and expectations set out in action plans for teachers and support staff to aim for. Leaders have now established a broader range of checks and performance measures, such as book reviews, learning walks and drop-in visits to lessons, so that teachers are now more accountable for the progress and performance of the pupils they teach. There are, however, staff that do not expect enough of pupils during lessons and do not understand how to identify or measure good rates of progress during lessons or over time.

The IEB has decided to continue its oversight and governance of the academy with a view to undertaking a skills audit in order to recruit effective and well qualified governors. This is a transitional stage towards establishing a functional governing body and is proving to be effective as the IEB and PB, established by OAT, are managing a robust scrutiny of staff performance and pupil outcomes. Regular assessments and raising attainment reviews of pupils' progress in Key Stage 4, including the progress and performance of Year 9 pupils, are now routine and well established. At the time of this inspection there are advanced plans in place to step up the same level of scrutiny in Years 7 and 8.

There is now more effective and focused leadership in the sixth form that is continuing to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and students' achievement and performance. Sixth form students have reported to an inspector



that they do not have the facilities or resources to undertake enough research in the academy's library. They are correct and this is an area that requires immediate attention in order to sustain the current pace of improvement to students' achievement.

### **External support**

The education adviser has recently carried out an accurate review of the academy's progress which provides leaders with a focus for sustained improvement to teaching and pupils' achievement. The PB and IEB provide the right balance of support and challenge for the academy's leaders and staff. Recent training and professional development for middle leaders, led by the education adviser, is resulting in more focused monitoring at departmental level.

Leaders, staff, the IEB and PB undertake honest and accurate evaluations of the academy's performance. Inspection findings show that leaders are addressing weaknesses in the performance of some staff through the use of individualised teaching plans that are being monitored by senior and middle leaders. These plans include opportunities for staff to undertake training and to be supported in order to improve their practice. Links with other academies and providers also provide increasing opportunities for staff to see and share good practice.