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10 October 2014

Marianne Gentilli
Principal
The Littlehampton Academy
Fitzalan Road
Littlehampton
BN17 6FE

Dear Ms Gentilli

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Littlehampton Academy

Following my visit with David Webster and Claire Austin-Macrae, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 8–9 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 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 may appoint two newly qualified teachers, one in the English department and one in the media department.

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 Academy Improvement Board, the Chief Executive of the Woodard Academies Trust and the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex.

Yours sincerely
Christopher Anders
Associate Inspector

Cc. Chair of the Governing Body
Cc. Local authority
Cc. The Secretary of State
Cc. The Education Funding Agency (EFA)
Cc. DfE - Academies Advisers Unit

Annex

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

- Improve teaching in order to raise achievement by ensuring teachers:
 - accurately assess students' progress and plan work that reflects their previous progress and attainment
 - provide challenging work for all students, especially the more able, those of middle ability and those supported through pupil premium funds
 - improve students' basic skills in literacy and numeracy, by providing frequent opportunities to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
 - insist that students take greater care with the presentation of their work so that they can refer to it when they revise for examinations.

- Ensure that senior leaders, and in particular the Principal:
 - provide clear direction for the academy's work by concentrating on how to bring about rapid improvements in teaching and achievement
 - accurately evaluate the quality of teaching by focusing on how well students learn so that feedback and training for teachers are clearly directed at improving the progress made by students
 - make arrangements for all subject leaders to receive training to help them develop effective teaching in their subjects
 - work closely with parents to address their concerns about the quality of education provide for their children.

- Improve the effectiveness of the academy council by making sure members understand how to discharge their responsibilities for holding the Principal and other key staff to account for the academy's performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. In addition, an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 8–9 October 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and groups of students. An inspector spoke to representatives of the academy improvement board and the Woodard Academies Trust. Inspectors observed 23 lessons, 18 of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. An inspector made brief visits to a number of sixth form lessons. Aspects of safeguarding arrangements were checked. Inspectors looked at a range of students' work and spoke with students informally at break and lunchtime.

Context

There have been further changes in teaching staff since the last inspection, with 20 staff leaving in the summer term. Nine teachers joined the school in September 2014, including two senior leaders. Four posts are currently being filled by temporary teachers. Ten teachers have been given additional responsibilities to improve teaching and learning.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The academy's provisional 2014 examination results show the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics was significantly below national levels. However, results in 10 subject areas rose, including in English, modern foreign languages and science. In some cases, the increase was from a low starting point. The results for GCSE mathematics were lower than expected. Leaders are undertaking further analysis of the achievement of groups of students to identify strengths and further areas for improvement.

Current students are making better progress. An effective system is in place to set challenging targets for individual students. In addition, frequent points have been set during the year to collect information about how well students are doing. These now include trial examinations in the autumn term for Year 11. It is too early to identify clear patterns of improvement across subjects, year groups and groups of students. The academy's leaders need to make sure that teachers use assessment information effectively to spot individual students who are falling behind and provide them with appropriate additional help.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving. In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations of all groups of students. They ask questions that capture students' interest and challenge students to think more deeply. Teachers move students on briskly so that little time is wasted. For example, in an English lesson, a

Carefully structured approach ensured that work was appropriate for the capabilities of different groups of students and the teaching assistant was able to provide effective support. Time limits set by the students themselves ensured that they were engaged and got a lot done, while a range of resources meant the lesson was personalised to cater for students with specific individual learning needs. Students' pride in their contributions to class discussions showed that they had worked at or above their targets.

The use of the new system to track students' progress is only just becoming embedded throughout the academy. Challenging targets are now set for individual students, and work in lessons is being adjusted accordingly. Teachers are beginning to provide more challenging activities, including work for more-able and middle-ability students and those supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority). However, this practice is inconsistent. The use of questioning to establish progress by students within each lesson needs further development. In many cases, teachers' questions are too easy to answer; they do not challenge students or hold their interest. Nor do they enable teachers to check how much students have learned.

Improving students' literacy skills is a key focus across the academy. Increased quality and frequency of marking mean that errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are regularly identified and corrected by teachers. Strategies such as 'word of the week' and teachers sharing examples of best practice are adding to the improvement in the quality of teaching. Further work is required to develop numeracy skills across subjects.

In less-effective lessons, teachers' expectations of what can be achieved are too low. As a result, students make slow progress or produce work that is not as good as it could be. Sometimes, more-able students are not provided with enough challenge to reach their full potential.

Students' presentation of their work is much improved. New systems to promote marking are used consistently. Students' responses to teachers' useful feedback and guidance show that they increasingly know how to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students and staff say that behaviour has improved. Clear and effective systems are in place to support behaviour in lessons and to ensure that any misbehaviour is dealt with consistently.

The students conduct themselves with pride, and teachers challenge students who do not follow the academy's rules. Students say that incidents of low-level disruption have reduced. As a result, students are better prepared to learn in lessons and they take greater care in their written work. However, when there are weaknesses in teaching, some students drift off task or find it difficult to listen to the teacher

without getting distracted. Responses to Parent View indicate that parents are supportive of the academy. The promotion of students' well-being is seen by parents as a particular strength. Clear, consistently implemented systems mean that students feel safe.

Fewer students are withdrawn from lessons for poor behaviour, and exclusions are reducing. Where students are removed from lessons to work elsewhere, their learning remains a priority.

An attendance officer has been appointed and there are systems to more effectively monitor students' attendance. Students with high levels of attendance are celebrated in assemblies and this is helping to raise with students the profile and importance of good attendance. Students supported by the pupil premium are still more likely to have lower attendance than their classmates.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The Principal has achieved a great deal since taking up the post. She is enthusiastic and ambitious for the academy, and has galvanised the staff to act on the areas for improvement. She is well supported by the senior leadership team. The academy improvement plan now sets out what needs to be done to make the necessary rapid improvements. Senior leaders' self-evaluation of the progress made by the academy is succinct and accurate.

Senior leaders now have a much clearer picture of the quality of teaching and students' achievement. As a result, senior leaders now have an accurate understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They observe teachers frequently to check their teaching and assess students' learning. They are increasingly skilled at observing teaching, judging the quality accurately and analysing what teachers need to do to improve. Leaders rightly provide teachers with useful feedback.

Leaders provide training for teachers that meet teachers' needs based on their stage of development. Effective work has been done to strengthen the capacity of subject leaders. They have received useful training to help them undertake their subject leadership responsibilities more effectively; for example, through paired lesson observations with senior staff. Changes have been made to the academy's curriculum at Key Stage 4 and further changes are planned at Key Stage 3 to increase the depth of the curriculum with more specialist subject teaching. It is too early to gauge the impact of these changes on students' achievement.

The academy's governance has passed to an academy improvement board in order to rapidly improve the effectiveness of governors' understanding of the progress being made. Following an external review of governance, there are plans to move to a new academy council to further increase the accountability of the Principal and senior staff.

The external review of the academy's use of pupil premium funding has been partially completed. Not all of the recommendations made so far have been implemented.

External support

The academy is being well supported by a range of external providers, including local teaching school alliances. Support is based on a better understanding of The Littlehampton Academy's current needs and includes coaching and mentoring of staff.

The Woodard Academy Trust has commissioned an external adviser to provide regular support to the senior leaders and other members of staff identified by the Principal. As a result, training opportunities are being provided for staff to learn with colleagues from other academies within the Trust.