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7 November 2014

Mr Rob Shadbolt
The Headteacher
Wood Green School
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Oxfordshire
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Dear Mr Shadbolt

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wood Green School

Following my visit with Theresa Phillips, Her Majesty's Inspector, Victor Chaffey, Additional Inspector, and Lesley Voaden, Additional Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 November 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 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 October 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 school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection after discussion with me about the subject area and support that will be provided.

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, the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
 - ensuring teachers use information about students' achievement to plan lessons which meet their different needs
 - ensuring that students are clear what is expected of them in lessons
 - sharing good practice in marking and feedback so that students are clear about what they have achieved and how to improve further, and have opportunities to act on this advice
 - making sure teaching in English enables all students to make better progress
 - improving the teaching for all groups in mathematics, including the most able, by providing harder work that offers more challenge
 - improving the quality of teachers' questioning so that students are clear about what is expected of them and are encouraged to think deeply about what they are learning.
- Raise the achievement of all groups of students, including in the sixth form, particularly for the less able and those in receipt of pupil premium funding, by ensuring that:
 - all staff have access to, and fully understand, the information about how well students are performing
 - all staff, including senior leaders, are fully accountable for the progress of the students they teach
 - high standards of literacy are promoted effectively across the school in different subjects making sure teaching in English enables all students to make better progress.
- Improve the effectiveness and impact of leaders at all levels, including governors, by ensuring that:
 - leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's performance by analysing the progress of all groups, including those in receipt of the pupil premium, those involved in the Year 7 literacy catch-up programme, those in the school's specially resourced provisions and those who attend the alternative provision
 - there is a consistent focus on the progress of all groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs and those eligible for pupil premium funding
 - the school's self-evaluation is accurate and that plans for the future for both staff and subjects are ambitious and focus sharply on improving the progress of all groups of students
 - pay rewards for teachers are linked to the achievement of the students they teach and that parents have accurate information about their children's progress
 - parents have accurate information about their children's progress.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 November 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders including the head of sixth form and literacy coordinator, small groups of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, students, parents and the local authority representative currently supporting the school. A telephone call was made to the authority representative who supported the school until the end of September 2014.

Context

A new deputy headteacher has been in post since September 2014. The school has consulted with stakeholders on its proposal to become the first school nationally to join an academy trust with Challenge Partners.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The 2014 unvalidated GCSE results in English and mathematics show that students' achievement is improving. Predictions in English were more accurate than those in mathematics. As a result, the right students were targeted to receive extra support. Mathematics teachers are starting to use students' performance in GCSE style tests to help predict final grades. The gap between the achievement of students eligible for pupil premium funding and other students is narrowing slowly but is still too wide. In 2014 GCSE examinations, students who are disabled or who have special educational needs made less progress than other students. This gap was wider in mathematics than in English.

The new system for tracking students' progress in Key Stages 4 and 5 means leaders have a better understanding of the current gaps in progress between different groups of students. The school's tracking shows that in Year 11 the gap in progress between those students who are eligible for additional funding and others is now closing. However, disabled students or those with special educational needs are not catching up as quickly as those eligible for pupil premium funding. Teachers have entered information from termly assessments on a new system for tracking progress in Key Stage 3 but this information has not yet been analysed. As a result, teachers do not know enough about their students' progress to set work that is pitched to enable students to achieve well.

External partners have conducted a review of special educational needs provision. This has yet to improve the progress of those disabled or special educational needs students who exclusively attend mainstream school.

The school has focused on ensuring teachers help students to express their subject knowledge in extended pieces of writing. However, currently teachers' approaches to this are not consistent. Consequently, the newly appointed deputy headteacher is

now responsible for monitoring how effectively and consistently the planned changes are being implemented.

In the sixth form, students' attainment in A-level examinations fell slightly. Robust procedures were put in place earlier this year to monitor students' progress and provide well-tailored subject-specific support for those falling behind. Early indications show that these systems are now embedded and are starting to have a positive effect on students' achievement.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching at Key Stages 4 and 5 is improving more rapidly than in Key Stage 3. This is because teachers have robust information about the targets and progress of the students they teach. They are using this to identify students who need one-to-one coaching and would benefit from targeted questioning. Some teachers are beginning to use the information to plan work that is pitched at the right level for groups of students. For example, in German and French classes, teachers are using challenge tasks to meet the needs of the more able. However, there is still not enough challenge for the most able students in Key Stage 4.

In Key Stage 3, teachers have still not got all the information on students' progress needed to plan tasks that meet the needs of different groups of learners. In some classes, a number of students, mostly, but not solely, those with special educational needs, are unclear about how to approach the work they are set. As a result of their confusion they produce work of a lower standard. Some more able learners are completing tasks quickly as they are not stretching enough.

In Key Stage 4, English students are taught how best to tackle examination questions and given model answers. However, in a number of English classes visited in both Key Stages 3 and 4, teachers explained the effects of writers' language rather than asking students to do this. Consequently, the more able students who were capable of forming their own explanations did not get the opportunity to do so. Less able students found the teachers' explanations too difficult to follow.

In mathematics, activities requiring students to use calculations in real life problems are beginning to improve the progress of the more able students. However, there is a high degree of inconsistency between classes in the way that teachers set up tasks and students work through activities in the lesson. Teachers are not always using the information about students' starting points to plan work which is simultaneously accessible and challenging.

In many subjects, teachers are identifying useful next steps for students at the end of the work they mark. Each department has its own marking policy and, as a result, marking in some subjects, such as history, is noticeably better than others. This freedom means that some students' books are marked more frequently and more thoroughly than others. When teachers mark work they are not consistently

challenging students to present their work neatly or checking what students have done in response to previous comments.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is generally good, both in lessons and at social times of the day. Where work was not pitched appropriately students occasionally lost interest and showed signs of disengagement. Incidents of poor behaviour are recorded clearly, with sufficient detail to support leaders in tackling them effectively. Teachers, parents and students report that there is little bullying. The new logging system helps leaders to monitor bullying, which remains minimal.

Attendance is just below the national average. The gaps in attendance between different groups of students are closing too slowly. Exclusion rates are low. However, half of the students who receive a period of exclusion within school have special educational needs or are eligible for pupil premium funding. Plans are now in place to rectify this disparity. The school is meeting its safeguarding requirements.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

As a result of the headteacher's purposeful leadership, there is clarity amongst senior leaders about the key priorities continuing to move the school forward. The new targets for managing teachers' performance are being applied rigorously. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are working with governors to ensure teachers on the top pay scale make a more significant contribution to improving the school. The new way of reporting to parents on students' progress is clearer and parents told inspectors that they can easily understand it.

Senior leaders are using the information from Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 tracking to set the agenda for individual discussions with subject leaders. As a follow up to these discussions some teachers are identified to receive extra training and guidance. However, leaders are not yet using the new system which tracks students' progress at Key Stage 3 to hold subject leaders to account.

The head of sixth form has a robust system in place to ensure subject teachers know students' starting points, set ambitious targets for students and regularly monitor their progress. The head of sixth form rigorously uses this information to hold subject leaders to account for the impact of extra study programmes.

The headteacher and senior leaders have accurately evaluated the school's progress to date. They are clear that the next stage is for teachers to use information on students' progress to plan work, devise questions and create resources that meet the needs of all learners. Subject leaders' roles in providing teachers with guidance on how best to do this are currently underdeveloped and the pace of these improvements is too slow.

Governors have implemented recommendations from the review of governance, which included a specific focus on the effectiveness of pupil premium funding. They have a tight monitoring schedule which is linked to the school's checks on progress. As a result of these checks, governors have asked for changes to be made and have asked the school to account for variations in the progress of different groups of students.

The school is making appropriate preparations to move to academy status. Well-considered plans are being developed with the potential sponsors so that their support for the school dovetails with that of the local authority.

External support

The headteacher has used his local knowledge to ensure that support brokered by the authority involves a small number of well-chosen partners to help teachers improve. The authority's school improvement leader, who worked with the school until recently, had a very sharp understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Good communication has meant that the recently appointed school improvement leader is able to pick up where the previous incumbent left off. The headteacher has also worked with a local leader of education who has experience of rapidly improving a school. The external support for the school is rightly evolving. It will now focus on training the middle leaders so that they can use information on students' progress to support and challenge the subject teachers they manage. The local authority task group which manages the support programme has been refocused to provide appropriate assistance as the school moves to academy status.