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Mrs J Pitman
Headteacher
Testwood Sports College
Testwood Lane
Totton
Southampton
SO40 3ZW

Dear Mrs Pitman

Special measures monitoring inspection of Testwood Sports College

Following my visit with Mary Hoather, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 2 and 3 December, 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 third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 to the removal of special measures.

The academy's statement of action is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection after discussion with me about the subject area and the 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching so that a high proportion is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers track the progress of students frequently, accurately and in sufficient depth to enable them to plan lessons that ensure students make rapid progress from their starting points
 - expectations, and consequently achievement targets, are consistently high and teachers provide suitable opportunities for students to challenge themselves and to develop confidence in learning how to make decisions for themselves about how to improve their work
 - all teachers give detailed written feedback frequently to their students and then ensure that recommended improvements are carried out
 - teachers prepare students properly for examinations so that all achieve well, including those supported by extra funding and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Raise levels of achievement in GCSE examinations, especially in English, so that standards are at least in line with national averages.
- Review, evaluate and improve the provision made to support students eligible for pupil premium funding so that the gaps between their achievement and that of others close.
- Ensure that incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively by all members of staff.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership at all levels by ensuring that:
 - there is rigour and precision in the evaluation of college policies, strategies and initiatives
 - the results of evaluation are used to improve provision and as a consequence, achievement
 - assessment data are accurate and are used effectively to promote students' progress
 - strategies already in place to improve teaching and learning are embedded and extended.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 December 2014

Evidence

Inspectors surveyed the academy's work and observed sixteen lessons, six were observed jointly with senior leaders. On the second day of the monitoring inspection a number of short visits were made to lower sets ('development groups'). Inspectors scrutinised the academy's evaluation of its work, behaviour logs and documents relating to governance. Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, small groups of teachers, a group of students from Key Stage 3 and another from Key Stage 4, the Chair of Governors along with two other governors, and the executive headteacher of The Arnewood School which is providing support for the academy.

Context

A temporary deputy headteacher joined the academy in September 2014.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Unvalidated 2014 GCSE examination results show that the overall percentage of students achieving five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics has risen significantly this year. However, the gap in attainment between those students eligible for additional premium funding and other students has widened.

The improved accuracy of teachers' marking in English meant the right students were identified to receive extra help. A carefully selected group of students took GCSE English in November 2013 when the examination included speaking and listening. As a result, achievement in English has improved considerably. The proportion of students reaching the threshold of a grade C has more than doubled. The proportion of students making expected progress has almost doubled and is securely above national average. However, despite these improvements, the gap in progress between those eligible for additional funding and other students remains too wide. The academy's own information for current Year 11 students shows this gap is narrowing.

The academy's predictions last year for GCSE achievement in mathematics were too generous. This year, the academy is sensibly using external partners to verify predictions. Improvements in GCSE mathematics have not been as significant as in English and as a result students' attainment is not as high as in English. The progress students make in mathematics has not risen significantly since last year and is slightly below national average. Although the gap in progress between those in receipt of additional funding and others is not as wide as it is in English, the proportion of this group making expected progress in mathematics remains too low.

The recently improved tracking of students' achievement during Key Stage 3 shows that some students make good progress towards challenging end of year targets. This tracking system is not yet providing leaders with the overview they need to compare the progress different groups of students are making, particularly those eligible for additional pupil premium funding. It is, however, providing parents and teachers with information on the progress individual students are making. The new temporary deputy headteacher has well-formulated plans to collate the data so it is more useful to leaders. However, as yet these plans have had little impact on improving the achievement of students eligible for additional funding which remains too low.

The quality of teaching

Frequent tests and practice examinations mean teachers have up-to-date and accurate information about how well students are doing. Students are now better prepared for their GCSE examinations. However, some students spend too much time sitting practice examinations which do not provide them with the subject-specific skills or the in-depth knowledge they need to make good progress.

Teachers are making better use of information which indicates what level students should be working at if they are going to hit their end of year targets. Many teachers are using this to identify which students are falling behind and need one-to-one support or catch-up classes. Some teachers rely too heavily on students accessing extra help. They do not always seek to improve students' achievement through planning work that is sufficiently challenging for students of all abilities.

Some teachers, mostly but not only in English and humanities, are now using information on students' progress to provide well-thought out resources to support less able students in completing the work set. In a history class, Year 10 students were answering a practice GCSE examination question. To support less able students, the teacher had provided possible ways of starting sentences to help them begin writing and colour-coded key facts to expand upon. As a result, all students were able to write a good length GCSE-style answer.

In Key Stage 3, some teachers place insufficient focus on checking students' learning and progress throughout the lesson. This was largely, but not solely, found in 'development groups'. Teachers in Key Stage 3 science and mathematics classes do not consistently plan lessons that ensure all students develop the subject-specific skills to make the necessary learning strides, such as the ability to record processes and methods of calculation. In some Key Stage 4 mathematics classes, teachers are challenging more able students with harder work, which they relish.

Teachers' marking is improving. Teachers are now consistently providing detailed subject specific next steps for improvement along with additional work or questions for students to respond to. The quality of the follow-up questions and tasks set by

teachers is variable, however. Not all teachers yet check the students' responses to follow-up questions and tasks.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Low-level disruption is more evident than it was at the previous visit. It is occurring when teachers set work that is not appropriately challenging. In lessons which are well-planned to meet students' needs, behaviour is good. Students from 'development groups' experience more disruption to their learning than those in the higher sets. Students from these sets told inspectors that some of their teachers tolerate the poor behaviour of a minority of students and allow it to prevent the majority from learning. The assistant headteacher who is responsible for behaviour has not sufficiently refined and developed the current systems in order to manage disruptive behaviour effectively.

The academy is now wisely gathering information on the attendance and behaviour of different groups of students. This information shows an overall decrease in recorded incidents of poor behaviour. However a high proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding are responsible for the poor behaviour in Years 10 and 7. Similarly overall attendance has improved. However in Years 10 and 11 the attendance of students eligible for pupil premium is much lower than that of other students. There is not yet a coherent approach to improving the outcomes of students who are eligible for pupil premium funding, and also have poor behaviour and attendance. These students are often placed in 'development groups' for the majority of their lessons.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The headteacher is moving the academy in the right direction. Her drive and ambition is unfaltering. In her short time in post she has introduced new approaches and systems which are appropriately focused on making the improvements outlined in the previous inspection report. For example, subject leaders now provide a written evaluation of their examination results for governors. However, some senior leaders have not been rigorous enough in their evaluation of the impact of their actions. Their expectations have been too low and they have not been ambitious enough for the students. As a result, some areas found to be making progress at the previous monitoring visit have slipped slightly.

There is currently insufficient capacity in the senior leadership team to make the short and long-term improvements the headteacher has rightly identified as necessary. As a by-product of this lack of capacity, the achievement of students in receipt of pupil premium funding has not improved quickly enough. Leaders' capacity to drive forward the areas for improvement will be the focus for the next monitoring visit.

The headteacher now sensibly manages the mathematics and science subject leaders as well as the subject leader for English. All subject leaders now produce a formal half-termly report for senior leaders which identifies classes where students' progress is too slow. Subject leaders provide extra support for the teacher and catch-up sessions for the students. However, leaders are not making enough use of these reports in their evaluation of teaching. Although subject leaders now monitor and check the quality of teaching and marking in their department, they do not all do so with the same degree of rigour. Leaders' guidance and support for non-specialists who teach mathematics and science is not having enough impact. As a result, the quality of teaching in these subjects is not as consistently effective as it is in English.

Senior leaders now monitor teaching with a greater degree of formality, producing detailed reports with recommendations for teachers. However, leaders' evaluations of teaching are sometimes too generous.

The governors rejected the first review of governance, which caused delays in improvements being made. Governors have astutely already implemented some recommendations from the recent second review, including attaching a governor to each department to evaluate improvements. However, governors are not yet holding the academy to account for the gap in achievement between students eligible for pupil premium funding and other students. They are acutely aware of their role in improving the leadership within the academy but as yet the governing body still lacks a governor with much-needed educational expertise.

External support

External support from The Arnewood School has focused on supporting the heads of mathematics and science and developing a link between the Chair of Governors at The Arnewood School and this academy. Planned support for the head of mathematics has not yet been implemented. The head of science has received training and support from The Arnewood School but the impact of this has yet to be seen on the quality of teaching in science. The executive headteacher of The Arnewood School conducted a review of pupil premium funding that was sharp and helpfully outlined necessary improvements. The headteacher has rightly begun to use her local knowledge to broker carefully selected bespoke support from other schools. However, The Arnewood School has made a commitment to providing the academy with further support which is appropriately focused and substantial.