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Ms M George and Ms T Peters
Headteachers
Stockland Green School
Slade Road
Erdington
Birmingham
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Dear Ms George and Ms Peters

Special measures monitoring inspection of Stockland Green School

Following my visit to your academy on 3 December 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 third 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 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 Governing Body, the Academies Advisers Unit, the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham and the Executive Principal of Arthur Terry Academy Trust.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that all students make good progress, particularly in English, and the proportion of students who attain grades A* to C in all of the subjects they study to at least the national average by making sure that:
 - teachers plan lessons that meet the needs of students of all abilities in the class, including the most-able students
 - all teachers, including of English, use every opportunity to support students to develop basic literacy skills and have high expectations of the presentation of students' written work
 - written feedback to students makes clear the next steps for improvement in the subject as well as in the accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

- Raise the attendance of all groups of students to at least the overall national average by making sure that:
 - students, parents and the local community become more aware of the direct link between good levels of attendance and achieving well, and the importance of not taking holidays during school term times
 - all teachers take responsibility for promoting good attendance and supporting students to catch up on any learning that they miss when they are absent from school.

- Reduce exclusion rates of all groups of students to at least the overall national average by implementing consistently effective systems to manage and improve the behaviour of those students who do not conform to the school's expectations.

- Improve students' behaviour in lessons and around the school site by:
 - making sure that teaching engages and motivates all students so that disruption to learning is minimised and positive attitudes to learning are promoted
 - eliminating boisterous behaviour around the school site by helping students to understand the need to be aware of the impact of their behaviour on other students.

- Strengthen the leadership of the school by making sure that:
 - the actions of the leaders of the academy trust and senior and subject leaders are focused on improving the quality of teaching, students' achievement, behaviour and attendance

- the school development planning is based on accurate evaluations of the school's effectiveness, reflects the priorities of the school's work and includes measurable criteria by which success can be judged
- the judgements made on the quality of teaching routinely take into account the impact of teaching on students' progress
- leaders of subjects, other areas of the school's work and individual teachers are held to account and take responsibility for the areas for which they are responsible
- leaders, including governors, ensure that the spending of the pupil premium funding has a direct impact on the achievement, behaviour and attendance of the students for whom it is intended to support.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 3 December 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteachers, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Executive Principal of the Arthur Terry Academy Trust. On this one-day visit the inspector looked in more detail at teaching and behaviour.

Context

There have been no major changes to teaching staff, and no changes to governance or academy status, since the previous monitoring inspection.

Achievement of students at the school

The achievement of students remains inadequate. The GCSE results in 2014 were disappointing overall. Too many students did not achieve the grades that were predicted for them in a number of subjects including mathematics. Academy leaders instigated an immediate review with support from the Arthur Terry Academy Trust. This revealed two serious weaknesses. In mathematics, teachers' assessment of attainment was optimistic, and some mathematical concepts were not understood well enough by students. The academy has appointed a GCSE mathematics principal examiner to analyse students' responses to typical exam questions. He then advises teachers on areas of weakness in the students' understanding and their skills in writing answers to meet the exam marking requirements. Other subjects, for example French and history, experienced lower than anticipated coursework marks.

Boys overall did significantly less well than girls, and although the attainment gap between disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium and the other students narrowed, this was because the attainment of those not supported by the pupil premium declined.

Not every subject undershot predictions. English results were in line with predictions. They were better than in 2013 and exceeded national expectations for progress from students' starting points. Students made reasonable progress in science, particularly boys in the separate science courses. Attainment improved in the performing arts subjects. The numbers of students getting the highest A/A* grades increased.

The quality of teaching

The day-to-day practice seen during this visit did show generally effective use of data on students' prior attainment to plan challenging tasks, and consistent use of the academy's marking policy. Where learning was most effective it also showed high quality ongoing assessment by the teacher of students' learning, and quick

adaptation of the original lesson plan to ensure all students really understood the ideas that they were addressing. For example, in an English lesson looking at a war poem, the teacher insisted that students literally marched around in time with the beat of the poem. This brought the text to life, but required his firm insistence that every student should participate! The students learned much more than just the definitions of technical elements of the poem; they felt the emotion being generated in their hearts by the speaking of the words. Some very good examples of clear feedback to students ensured each of them could move on to the next area of learning, knowing exactly what they needed to do to improve their work. This was also very effective in a mathematics lesson, where high levels of challenge were matched to the high ability of many of the students, supported by well-prepared resources that ensured they could smoothly move on to tackle the next steps in their work. Students are taking a pride in their work now, and no examples were seen during this visit of untidy presentation or habitually unfinished work.

Some feedback from teachers was much less precise, and much less demanding, requiring only that students 'revise', or 'improve their handwriting next time'. It was rare to read of students having to redo a piece of work to a higher standard. In some cases, too much support by way of worksheets limited the challenge given to students.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Year 11 students say that 'it is much stricter now', and they welcome the improvements in behaviour because they say there is much less disruption to their learning in lessons. The behaviour policy is being consistently applied, even according to some students on the receiving end of sanctions. These students say that the academy is better and they enjoy learning now. Their attendance, along with that of almost all other students, has improved significantly since 2013. The number of serious incidents is reducing, although 'detentions' remain fairly high. This is because the threshold for triggering a detention has dropped from 'high level' disruption to 'low-level', and expectations of behaviour are higher now. Students move around the academy calmly, and in particular patiently between lessons. However, major movement bottlenecks arise because there is insufficient stairway capacity to handle over 700 people changing rooms at the same time.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders have responded swiftly to unearth the reasons behind the poor GCSE results. They have recruited external help, including expertise from the Arthur Terry Academy Trust and an additional independent National Leader of Education with experience of improving mathematics. The overall outcomes for the 2013/14 Year 11 students reflect the legacy of weak teaching over time, including poor preparation for controlled assessments and teachers' inaccurate judgements on attainment. These shortfalls are now being tackled through better management of teachers'

performance, training for staff, and additional external checking of assessment and teaching quality.

Leaders now take a more measured approach to regular whole-school assessment checks. These events are now staggered across the term, with a week assigned per year group to allow time for subject leaders to moderate the results of short-term assessments in conjunction with senior staff and external consultants, in the presence of link governors. Governors in turn now receive class-by-class data. If this is reliable, it allows them to see the relative effectiveness of teaching across a subject. The governors recognise that improvement depends on accurate assessments of students' progress, and have committed substantial resources to try and avoid a repetition of the 2013/14 circumstances. One 'green shoot' from the past year is that where students had been identified as needing extra support, they did achieve as they should. The problem, in hindsight, was that some students who should have been supported this way were missed because of over-optimistic internal assessments during the academic year.

There remains a risk that too much focus on 'examination strategy' might distract teachers from ensuring students fully understand what they are learning. For example, the inspector saw students being taught how to solve simple algebraic equations using a 'triangle' visual aide-memoire. This might have helped in the specific example, but will not allow students to develop their general ability to solve algebraic relationships that use different symbols.

External support

The academy has made good use of expertise from the Arthur Terry Academy Trust and the National Leader of Education. Their support has helped to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments and is beginning to have an impact on the general quality of teaching.