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17 December 2014

Mr Jack Pendlebury
Headteacher
Enterprise South Liverpool Academy
51 Horrocks Avenue
Liverpool
L19 5NY

Dear Mr Pendlebury

Special measures monitoring inspection of Enterprise South Liverpool Academy

Following my visit to your academy on the 16 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 school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, a representative of the governing body, a representative of School Improvement Liverpool (SIL), a representative of the sponsors, members of the senior leadership team, two curriculum leaders and a group of students. A telephone conversation took place with the Chair of the Governing Body. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan were evaluated. Performance management documents were also looked at.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection the Principal has resigned and will leave the academy at the end of term. The vice-Principal will become acting head of academy, supported two days each week by an interim executive headteacher who is a National Leader of Education (NLE) and, for a further two days a week, by another experienced headteacher.

Work has also begun to change the sponsorship of the academy from five sponsors to two faith sponsors. This will also bring a complete change in governance. At this point Enterprise South Liverpool Academy would have a substantive head of academy and an overarching executive head for the trust. The date of this change is not confirmed.

The local authority and sponsors have commissioned support from SIL which has undertaken several reviews and has helped to produce the action plan.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The sponsors and governors have fully accepted the findings of the section 5 inspection. They have formulated a plan of action that incorporates a radical and significant change to the sponsorship, governance and leadership of the academy going forward. These changes have only just been finalised and have yet to be communicated to the staff and some of the governors of the academy or the parents.

It is now critical that these plans are shared more widely. The sponsors and interim executive Principal need to ensure that roles and responsibilities of the leadership team, including those who are supporting the academy, are appropriate and clear to everyone. Staff spoken to were very unsure about the plans for the future leadership and this is affecting staff morale.

In response to the inspection report, the governors have set up a challenge board which includes external advisors. The board meets monthly and focuses on monitoring the progress the academy is making towards the removal of special measures. It also holds the academy leaders to account.

SIL provides a lot of support to the academy, which is necessary at this early stage of recovery. However, going forward, plans must be made to reduce the reliance on external support and build capacity to drive improvement from within the academy itself.

To date, the pace of improvement has been too slow. This is because senior leaders have focused too much on processes that will review and measure provision rather than actions to improve it. At the moment precise strategies for bringing about very rapid improvement have not been analysed in sufficient detail to bring about the urgent changes needed.

The action plan lacks milestones and measurable success criteria which would help leaders check on progress being made. It also fails to identify clear lines of responsibility and accountability. Unless the milestones are articulated within the plan the sponsors and governing body will not be in a position to challenge academy leaders. Neither will they be able to ensure that the right actions and interventions take place and lead to the intended impact on outcomes for students.

Some areas of concern are not addressed in the action plan. For example, how senior leadership will be improved and what academy leadership will look like in the future.

Curriculum leaders spoken to felt that they are better able to hold teachers to account for their performance. This is shown in performance management documents, which also show that the academy is now focusing on the progress that students make rather than just the need to achieve a grade C at GCSE. The performance of the students as they leave primary school is now used to set challenging targets for all students. It is too early to see the impact of this change.

Academy leaders believe that the academy's data are more accurate than previously and they have sought external checking to confirm this. The academy's tracking of the performance of students currently in Year 11 indicates a slower rate of progress in English and mathematics compared to the previous cohort. However, staff are confident that they can now put effective interventions in place to accelerate the pace of students' progress. I will be looking at this closely on my next monitoring inspection.

The plan to improve teaching and learning continues to develop. There is evidence that the new way of evaluating teaching, using work scrutiny and data on students' progress, is giving a much more realistic view of teaching. Most importantly it enables leaders to tailor individual support for teachers rather than whole-school training for everyone.

The literacy policy has been reviewed but it is not on the website which remains none compliant with Department for Education requirements. There are very early indications that some of the strategies used to improve literacy are showing signs of impact. One-to-one reading is improving the reading ages of a number of students. Leaders are planning to deliver more training through the year; this must be planned

so that teachers have time to develop students' literacy skills systematically in their teaching. The impact of this training must be measured.

The development of numeracy across the academy is in its early stages because leaders have made the development of literacy skills the higher priority. The proposed linking of mathematics teachers to curriculum areas is a good idea but as yet it is too early to evaluate any impact.

There is now a sharp focus on fixed term exclusions, attendance and behaviour; leaders clearly understand the link between these. Leaders are drawing more effectively on data to help them pinpoint where the problems are so that they can tackle issues in a more systematic way. Levels of persistent absence have already declined because there has been swift and effective action to reduce it.

Students say that since the inspection staff have higher expectations of them, especially with regards to behaviour in class. One student said 'they won't put up with messing any more so we can get our heads down and work'.

Students like lessons where there are different things to do. They feel that they make the most progress when teachers mark their work often and tell them how to improve it. They highlighted biology, English, mathematics and computer science as lessons where this happens. It was also really good to hear them describe so clearly how they had to approach controlled assessments in English to make sure they could achieve the best grade possible.

Students talk enthusiastically about occasions when they are asked for their opinions, for example by subject surveys, as they know their views are listened to. The planned student council is also a popular initiative. All said they felt very safe at the academy, that bullying was rare and everyone knows who to go to if there is a problem.

The academy is making good use of external support, for example, in English where there has been a specific focus on checking the accuracy of teachers' marking. The lead for behaviour has set up a working group to develop a revised behaviour policy based on his visit to an outstanding school.

The review of the pupil premium (additional funding provided for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority) has not yet been undertaken, but it has been commissioned. This remains an absolute priority as the academy is still not meeting statutory requirements regarding the publication of the spending of this funding and the impact that it has on making sure the disadvantaged students achieve as well as their peers.

A decision to defer the review of governance was made due to changes in sponsorship and leadership. The review should take place quickly and before my next monitoring inspection.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The sponsor's statement of action would benefit from the addition of a statement regarding the educational viability of the academy. It also needs to describe how sponsors will engage with parents throughout the process.

The academy's plan is not fit for purpose.

The academy's plan lacks milestones. It does not make it clear who is responsible for monitoring and evaluation. It has too much emphasis on review and monitoring rather than actions. Training for staff is not well planned, there is no mention of the development needs of the senior leaders in the academy. It is hard to see how leaders, governors and sponsors will know if the academy is on track to improve. It is vital that the interim executive Principal makes the development of the plan a priority, ensuring that all academy leaders share the plan and are held accountable for the parts that are their responsibility. The plan should make clear how and when the academy will comply with its statutory requirements in terms of policies, procedures and web site.

A revised plan should be submitted by the end of January 2015.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director for Children and Young Peoples Services for Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Mullaney

Associate Inspector

Appointed as Associate Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of part 2 of schedule 12 to the Education and Inspection Act 2006