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22 January 2015

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 Stephanie Matthews and Karen Roche, additional inspectors, to your academy on 20 and 21 January 2015, 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that 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 Academy Improvement Board, the Chief Executive of the

Woodard Academies Trust, the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex, the Education Funding Agency and the DfE Academy Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Anders
Associate inspector

Appointed as an additional inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

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 provided 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 third monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 January 2015

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, 15 of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors made visits to a number of sixth form lessons. Aspects of safeguarding arrangements were checked. Inspectors looked at 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 19 teachers leaving, including six part-time staff. Three teachers joined the school in January 2015, including the special educational needs coordinator. Twelve teaching posts are currently being filled by long-term supply teachers. Four teachers have been given additional responsibilities to improve teaching and learning, and two support staff have been appointed to lead on pupil premium initiatives (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority).

Achievement of pupils at the school

Trial examinations taken by Year 11 students last term have provided useful information about students' current progress. Results have been checked by external advisors appointed by the Woodard Academies Trust. As a consequence, teachers' predictions about students' achievement are more accurate. Students' achievement is still some way short of the challenging targets set by senior leaders but does indicate improvement. For example, students' attainment in GCSE mathematics is set to rise significantly in 2015. Gaps between the performance of disadvantaged students and their classmates are too wide. While leaders have begun to ensure disadvantaged students get the additional help they need, this has not yet had enough impact on their achievement.

Leaders have introduced 'flight paths' to show students their progress towards targets. As a result, students have a better understanding of how well they are doing and what they still need to do to improve. There is a sharp focus on ensuring students make better progress than before and raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve. Year 11 students reflect thoughtfully on how they can improve. For example, they are keen to have more opportunities to test their progress in further trial examinations.

The quality of teaching

Leaders have a relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it effectively to plan activities that help students to make better progress. Teaching assistants work well to support students' learning because of good communication with class teachers before the lesson.

However, the quality of teaching is still too variable. In weaker lessons, students lose concentration when tasks are too easy or too difficult. In other lessons, teachers do not ensure that students have grasped the necessary knowledge or skills before moving on to the next part of the lesson. This means students do not make the progress they could. Teachers do not always take opportunities to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For example, in a sixth form lesson about attachment theory, an opportunity to explore the social and moral aspects of the theory was missed.

Teachers' feedback is not consistently useful because it does not always help students improve. When teachers give detailed and relevant feedback, their assessments help students know how well they are doing. In lessons when students are clear about what they need to do to succeed, they give each other detailed and accurate comments on how to improve their work. The most able students are not always challenged enough or given opportunities to undertake sufficiently difficult work.

The teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is not as well developed as the teaching of literacy. Students' literacy skills continue to improve through systems put in place at the start of the school year and the regular use of subject-specific vocabulary in lessons. While consistent strategies to develop numeracy skills are not yet in place, a few examples of teachers supporting numeracy skills were observed, for example, a counting task in a Year 7 English lesson costing castle building in history, and exploring probability in a Year 11 science lesson about genetics.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students say they feel safe in the academy. However, younger students feel older students dominate outdoor spaces at times. Senior leaders have introduced effective systems to ensure that expectations of students' conduct are high. Most students behave well. Leaders have responded robustly to incidents of poor behaviour. When students are clear about teachers' expectations, behaviour is at its best. However, students' behaviour is not as good when teachers do not notice, or fail to challenge, students' inattention or inappropriate talking in lessons. Leaders have rightly identified introducing rewards for students' good behaviour as an important area for further development.

Some students' poor attendance affects their progress. In particular, there are significant gaps between the attendance of disadvantaged students and their peers. Leaders have rightly put in place many incentives to encourage students to attend more regularly. It is too early to see the impact of this work.

Students appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, for example as representatives in the student parliament. Careers education is being effectively targeted; individual careers interviews have been provided for those students most in need of help in making the right choices for their next steps after leaving the academy.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The academy's senior leaders are driven, relentless, focused and passionate. They have a sharper focus on what needs to be done to make necessary improvements. Senior leaders increasingly hold subject leaders to account for students' achievement. Effective training provided through the trust and from external sources has contributed to a greater confidence of leaders in their role. Leaders increasingly support each other and share good ideas.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. They monitor teaching regularly, including frequent visits to lessons and scrutiny of students' work. Senior leaders rightly focus on areas of underperformance and are beginning to involve more subject leaders and other staff in this process. Leaders look at what happens on a typical day to ensure that the quality of all lessons increases. Leaders' advice to teachers about how to improve is too variable in quality. The best feedback concisely identifies for teachers what to do to improve their teaching. However, at other times, leaders' feedback focuses too much on the teacher's explanation of the lesson rather than providing a succinct evaluation.

Despite challenges in recruiting staff, senior leaders are resolute about the need to employ good teachers and will not settle for second best. Students report that the staffing is more settled, and this is supported by the appointment of long-term temporary teachers and a more stable group of supply teachers. Senior leaders recognise that it is important to balance the need for rapid improvement and change alongside gaining stability in staffing and not overloading teachers with too many new activities.

Parent and community reference groups are now in place. This is helping the academy to build useful links with the wider community. These provide leaders with valuable feedback about the changes that have been made and any further areas for improvement.

The academy's improvement board continues to monitor the progress the academy is making. The Chair of the Academy Improvement Board has a clear understanding of the progress being made and the next steps for improvement. The Woodard Academies Trust is currently advertising for applications to join a new Academy Council which will be formed in the summer term. The council will shadow the improvement board for one term before taking over governance.

The external review of the academy's use of pupil premium funding is expected to be completed later this term. Two members of staff currently oversee the use of this funding and are due to receive external support to make sure this is effective.

External support

The academy continues to be well supported by a range of external providers, including local teaching school alliances and experts from other schools. Support is carefully tailored to the academy's needs. The Principal and the director of education for the Woodard Academies Trust target this support effectively to where it is most needed. Leaders are more effective because of good-quality training provided by the trust and other external sources.