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23 March 2015

Matthew Wynne
Executive Principal
Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy
Eliot Street
Nechells
Birmingham
B7 5LB

Dear Mr Wynne

Special measures monitoring inspection of Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy

Following my visit with Simon Mosley, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 19–20 March 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 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 January 2014. 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 not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of the Governing Body
cc. Local authority
cc. The Secretary of State

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that all teachers:
 - take account of what pupils already know, understand and can do when planning activities, especially for more-able pupils and those who are disabled and have special educational needs
 - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the quality of work that pupils produce
 - provide pupils with the precise guidance they need to improve their work.

- Raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by making sure that pupils:
 - spell correctly, use grammar and punctuation appropriately and write legibly
 - have the opportunity to solve more difficult mathematical problems
 - have regular chances to use and extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills and knowledge in different subjects.

- Ensure that all leaders and managers:
 - have the skills needed to check carefully the quality of teaching and pupils' learning
 - have the expertise required to help teachers improve their teaching
 - use information about pupils' achievement to check carefully how well different groups of pupils are learning
 - take prompt action once weaknesses are identified in teaching and pupils' learning
 - make sure that pupil premium funding is helping pupils who are eligible for this additional support to make good progress and reach higher standards in all year groups.

- Make sure that governors develop their skills so that they can ensure that leaders and managers help pupils make good and better progress.

An external review of governance and the academy's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 19–20 March 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Executive Principal, the pastoral leader, groups of pupils, representatives from the local governing body, and representatives from the sponsor, E-ACT. Her Majesty's Inspectors observed parts of lessons and scrutinised a range of documents, including action plans, information about pupils' attainment, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance and exclusion records, and records showing how the academy cares for its students and keeps them safe.

Context

Since the last inspection, an Executive Principal has joined the academy. Two class teachers and four teaching assistants have left and five class teachers and six teaching assistants have been appointed. A building site supervisor has been employed along with a strategic business manager. A new governing body has been formed following the demerger of the previous governing body. Sponsors and governors have appointed a new head of academy, who will start work in the summer term.

Achievement of pupils at the school

It remains unclear how well pupils are achieving across the academy. Leaders now gather information about pupils' attainment and have just begun to look at the standards of different groups. However, this information has not been shared with sponsors, governors or class teachers. There is no information to show the progress that pupils make, apart from those in Year 6. As a result, there remains a lack of clarity about how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to achieve their potential and catch up with any previous underperformance. The academy is predicting that results will improve this year. However, in the absence of robust progress data, it is difficult to know if this will happen.

New systems to record pupils' data are developing. However, at the current time, staff and leaders are not using the information they hold on pupils' attainment to inform planning of lessons or activities. The Executive Principal is beginning to hold pupil progress meetings with class teachers in an attempt to hold them to account for the progress pupils make. However, as there is very little progress information, these meetings have limited success.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved. This is because leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and then provide training to help teachers improve their practice.

Teachers now have appropriate performance targets linked to the quality of their teaching. These have so far made little difference to the quality of teaching. Evidence gathered from pupils' books show pupils make too little progress in many subjects. There is insufficient work in pupils' books and as a result, their progress is limited. For example, since January, Year 4 pupils have completed only three pieces of topic work. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects.

Much of the pupils' work is of a poor standard and too little care is given to how pupils present their work. The work in pupils' books includes scribbles, writing with crayons and scruffy presentation. The teachers rarely identify this as unacceptable.

When learning is less effective, activities are not matched to the individual capabilities of all pupils. Often the most able pupils spend too long practising their skills, and are not moved on quickly enough to new learning once they have grasped what they are doing. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are not always able to make enough progress as the activities set for them are inappropriate.

Where learning is more effective, teachers show high expectations and know pupils well. Teachers and teaching assistants work well collaboratively to support pupils in making progress. Activities challenge pupils and effective questioning helps pupils to understand their learning. Better learning is evident in Year 6, where there is some indication of pupils beginning to make much better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Some marking of pupils' work help them to make progress, and some encourages a dialogue between teachers and pupils to improve pupils' understanding. However, not all work is marked. Teachers do not always rectify pupils' basic spelling mistakes, such as spelling of the days of the week and months of the year. This does not help pupils to quickly improve their literacy skills.

Children in the early years frequently use the outdoor environment. This is a stimulating environment and children enjoy going outside as part of their learning. However, staff do not use it well to support children's basic skills in mathematics and writing. As a result, children make less progress than they should.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The academy's systems, policies and procedures to keep pupils safe are weak because insufficient attention has been given to safeguarding and child protection. As a result, leaders cannot be sure everything has been done to minimise the risks pupils face. For example, the child protection policy is not compliant with statutory requirements, child protection procedures for vulnerable pupils are not robust enough and leaders are not following up referrals made to Birmingham City Council.

Staff have not read the necessary guidance about keeping children safe in education and the governor responsible for child protection has not checked on the academy's procedures and systems. Leaders have been too slow to organise staff training on keeping pupils safe from the potential risks of radicalisation and extremism. This raises serious concerns and requires urgent attention.

Generally pupils' behaviour has improved. Pupils are polite and well mannered around the academy, and are courteous to one another. A new behaviour system has been introduced which outlines clear expectations of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The new system enables leaders to analyse patterns of poor behaviour and put in place strategies to improve different types of behavioural issues.

Although there is some poor behaviour, pupils say it is quickly dealt with and does not prevent them from feeling safe. Pupils report a great confidence in the new 'Sharp System' where they can report worries and concerns on line.

Other positive changes have been introduced, such as alterations to the building to make it more secure. Pupils have received information about e-safety and they understand the associated risks about social networking sites.

Attendance has improved and incentives to encourage pupils to attend the academy regularly have had a positive impact. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has declined and there are now far fewer fixed-term exclusions.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new Executive Principal started work with an enormous job ahead of him to improve the academy. He has prioritised improving the quality of teaching, which has led to some improvements. He is beginning to focus on monitoring how well pupils are achieving through new tracking procedures, including evaluating the performance of different groups of pupils. Through this information, he is now able to develop strategies to improve achievement, for example by expanding the level of support to help pupils catch up with their learning.

Due to an absence of senior leaders across the academy, roles and responsibilities remain unclear. Currently the Executive Principal is operating without a full senior leadership team. As a result, he holds responsibility for too many important aspects of the academy's work and this is leading to a lack of strategic direction. For example, leaders and governors have not carefully reviewed how well the pupil premium – additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in care – is used to help disadvantaged pupils improve their achievement.

The curriculum is not sufficiently well developed. The amount of time pupils spend learning different subjects is not well balanced, and leaders have not made suitable plans for how pupils will be taught about fundamental British values.

There are currently no subject leaders across the academy. Consequently only the Executive Principal is monitoring teaching and the quality of subjects. This is preventing the academy from moving forward at a suitable pace.

A new governing body has been formed. The sponsor, E-ACT, has provided suitable training for those new to their role. The new governors show commitment and enthusiasm. However, they do not have a good enough grasp of how well the academy is performing and they do not understand data on pupils' performance. As a result, governors are not fully able to hold leaders to account.

External support

E-ACT, since the last visit, has provided significant support and challenge to the academy. It has appointed new staff, improved business systems and altered the way it checks on the academy. The 'raising achievement board' now meets more often and is beginning to scrutinise data in more depth, including detailed analysis of Year 6 pupils' performance. It has a more 'hands-on' approach and continues to show commitment to improving pupils' outcomes. A new E-ACT Systems Leader has recently started working with the academy. He has quickly got to grips with the issues and is providing effective support to the Executive Principal.

E-ACT has arranged support from local outstanding providers to help strengthen leadership. However, there remains too little progress across the academy towards the removal of special measures.

Priorities for further improvement

- Immediately improve the systems and procedures for safeguarding and child protection.