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Mr Richard Butler
Interim Principal
St Peter's Academy
Fenton Manor
Fenton
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 2RR

Dear Mr Butler

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Peter's Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 7 May 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative of the sponsor. Information about students' current achievement, behaviour and attendance was analysed and other documents, including reports from the Woodard Academy Partner and minutes of meetings of the interim executive board were examined. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's operational improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection, the director of mathematics has resigned from this role and the two assistant directors are leading the department on a temporary basis. A new interim executive Principal has been appointed and the academy is in the process of recruiting a substantive Principal. A new staffing structure, including these roles, will be in place for September 2015.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

You, your senior leaders, members of the interim executive board and the sponsors have accepted the findings of the inspection and have responded with determination to improve the academy. There is a shared purpose to improve teaching and raise achievement and you have provided direction for other leaders to drive further improvements. With the support of the sponsors, the interim executive board and your staff, you have brought the academy much-needed purpose and a sense of urgency. For example, you quickly constructed an operational improvement plan which addressed the issues that needed to be dealt with immediately. As a result, systems and structures are now in place that will provide a firm foundation for the restructured senior team to build upon in order to secure further improvements. It is crucial that the sponsors provide you with regular opportunities to work with newly appointed senior leaders in order to embed and develop what is now in place.

The academy now has a clear accountability system for all staff and actions taken to improve teaching are beginning to have an impact. More account is taken of a range of evidence when judging the quality of teaching over time. This includes evidence of the progress students are making, work in books and lesson observations. This information is used to provide appropriate training and support and to hold staff to closer account. It also informs the management of teachers' performance when targets are set and reviewed. However, according to the academy's records, some inadequate teaching remains and too much teaching is less than good. Academy leaders must take prompt action to ensure that the plans that are in place to support and challenge individual teachers quickly lead to consistently good teaching for all students.

Current achievement data indicate that progress in mathematics is improving and that students' achievement is better in religious education than in other subject areas. However, attainment and progress in English are not as strong as in mathematics and the achievement of disadvantaged students continues to be considerably lower than that of other pupils in the academy. Leaders have not confirmed a date for when the review of how leaders are using the pupil premium (additional government money) is to take place. A date for this review must be set this term.

Members of the interim executive board have the skills, knowledge and understanding to provide appropriate support and challenge to senior leaders in the academy. They hold regular meetings and work closely with the sponsors and teaching staff. As actions are monitored closely, the chair of the board has a clear understanding of the progress that is being made to address areas of concern.

The sponsors have given proportionate and timely support since the inspection in January 2015. For example, they have provided two members of the interim executive

board and the Woodard Academy Partner has accurately reviewed aspects of the academy's work and given useful recommendations.

The sponsors' action plan sets out a clear timescale by which they expect the academy to be judged as 'good'. It includes actions to address all areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report and clearly shows who is responsible for carrying out, monitoring and evaluating these actions. The plan includes regular milestone checks, so senior leaders, members of the interim executive board and the sponsors can check that the academy is moving to 'good' within the desired timeframe.

Sponsors and academy leaders have not taken sufficient account in the improvement plans of how they are going to tackle the well below average attendance of students, particularly those supported by the pupil premium. Academy leaders are aware that, despite slight improvements over the last three years, attendance is still well below the national average. Consequently, improving attendance needs greater focus and your improvement plans must be amended to reflect this additional priority.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The academy's operational improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint one newly qualified teacher to teach religious education. I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint any other newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Chairman of the Woodard Academies Trust, the Director of Education for Diocese of Lichfield and the Acting Executive Director - People for Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector