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Rebecca Staples
Headteacher
Danum Academy
Armthorpe Road
Doncaster
DN2 5QD

Dear Ms Staples

Special measures monitoring inspection of Danum Academy

Following my visit with Robert Berry, Russell Ayling and Lis Stock, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 7–8 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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.

I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint NQTs.

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 School Improvement Board and the Director of Children's Services for Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Tanya Stuart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that all teaching in Years 7 to 11 is at least good by making certain that all teaching staff:
 - have high expectations of students and set demanding work
 - take accurate account of students' prior knowledge and understanding when planning lessons
 - carry out frequent checks on how well students are learning in a lesson and make changes when students need more support or need to be stretched and challenged further
 - provide sufficient opportunities for students to take a lead in their own learning
 - set homework that is relevant and demanding and follows an overall plan that is shared with students and parents, especially in Key Stage 3.

- Raise achievement rapidly, so that all students make at least expected progress, particularly in mathematics, science, and Key Stage 3 English, by:
 - making sure staff in all subjects pay close attention to improving students' numeracy, oral communication, reading and writing, especially punctuation, spelling and grammar
 - ensuring staff quickly identify all students who are not making enough progress in their work, and target them for support in lessons
 - making more effective use of additional adult support in lessons.

- Reduce absence and the number of fixed-period exclusions to at least national rates by:
 - increasing students' awareness of the importance of good attendance for good achievement
 - finding effective ways to work in partnership with parents to improve their children's attendance, behaviour and achievement
 - analysing information on students' behaviour and attendance more rigorously to identify patterns in the barriers that students might face and work out ways to overcome them.

- Improve the effectiveness of senior and subject leaders in driving improvement by:
 - ensuring judgements on, and evaluation, of teaching are accurate
 - managing the performance of staff with greater rigour and holding them to account, rewarding effective teaching and supporting weaker teaching
 - making sure every student is set targets that are sufficiently challenging.

- Ensure that the governing body is fully effective in driving improvement by making certain that governors:
 - have accurate information on students' achievement and the quality of teaching
 - hold senior leaders rigorously to account for making rapid improvements to teaching and students' achievement
 - monitor the use of pupil premium funding and fully challenge leaders on how effectively funding is being used to ensure that these pupils make at least expected progress.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 7–8 May 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work and scrutinised documents including minutes of meetings of the School Improvement Board (SIB) (the academy's governing body), the single central register and data relating to the attainment and progress of students. The inspection team met with members of the School Improvement Board, the headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, teachers, staff who work as additional adults in lessons, and four groups of students. Students were also spoken to during break and lunchtimes. A meeting was also held with representatives from CfBT, the Trust that sponsors the academy.

The inspection team observed 48 parts of lessons, 15 of which were seen together with senior and middle leaders. Short visits were made to the Year 11 intervention sessions taking place during the inspection. In addition, short visits were made to three physical education lessons.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in January 2015 there have been changes to staffing in various departments. This is because of staff taking maternity leave and absence because of illness. A number of staff are leaving the academy at the end of August 2015.

Achievement of pupils at the school

A higher proportion of students across the academy are now making expected progress. This is particularly so in mathematics and English. A higher proportion of girls are making the progress expected of them. Although boys are making more progress than they were, there is still a gap between the progress made by girls and boys. Disadvantaged students, like their peers, are making better progress. The gaps between the progress made by disadvantaged students and their peers are still wide but are closing.

As a result of the increased progress being made by students, levels of attainment are rising. The academy's very detailed data about students' progress and attainment show a higher proportion of students will leave Year 11 in 2015 with five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics. The academy uses the data to identify students who need extra support and to provide it quickly. The extra help and guidance are currently focused on Year 11 and include changes to the timetable

and bespoke teaching sessions, but are not exclusive to Year 11. The data are also used to make sure all students have challenging targets against which their progress is very carefully tracked.

The academy has focused on developing the students' literacy skills. This has been done through reading sessions in Key Stage 3 and a determined focus in lessons on key vocabulary, spelling and punctuation across the academy. Students are given opportunities to write extensively in subjects other than English and this is enhancing their ability to use English correctly. Work to develop the students' numeracy skills is being done in tutor time, but the strategies are much less well developed than in literacy.

The quality of teaching

Since the last monitoring visit in January 2015 senior leaders have had a determined focus on improving the quality of marking and feedback. Students' work shows that the quality of marking in English and mathematics is improving. Much feedback is helping the students to make better progress as it is detailed, states what the students need to do to improve and is followed through. This is what is expected by the academy's assessment policy. The students appreciate the use of 'MAD' (Making a Difference) time, when they consider the marking the teacher has done. When this time is used effectively it enhances the students' understanding. However, the quality of assessment is not consistently good across the academy.

In the majority of lessons teachers now show higher expectations of students. This is because teachers are now using the detailed data the academy holds to set more demanding work. In many lessons, the students are rising to these higher expectations. In some lessons, for example German, music, history, mathematics and English, frequent checks are made to make sure the students understand fully what they are doing. In some lessons, if students finish the work more quickly they are given additional work that stretches and challenges them. However, in many lessons all the students are still given the same work, regardless of their knowledge and understanding.

There are many additional adults in lessons, including coaches in physical education, teaching assistants and learning assistants. In some lessons these additional adults are an integral part of the learning. They support the students and plan with the teachers, and as a result students make better progress. This was especially seen in a Year 8 literacy lesson. However, in other lessons these additional adults are not as effective and the students do not benefit as much as they could.

Teachers are now setting much more homework, and it supports students' learning more effectively. As one Year 8 student said, 'Homework now is not about finishing off what we do in class, it's more about planning and preparing for future learning.'

In some subjects homework is much more demanding and enhances the students' progress, but this is not always the case. In addition, homework is not set consistently across all subjects.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The proportion of students who persistently do not attend the academy is decreasing steadily. It is now much closer to the national average. The academy has worked extremely hard with parents and students to bring down the proportion of students who are persistently absent and the strategies have had a positive impact.

Overall attendance has risen. Boys and disadvantaged students are attending more regularly. Attendance data are reviewed very regularly and action is taken within 24 hours if needed to ensure attendance does not decrease. Students are much more aware of the reasons why they need to attend the academy regularly.

The proportion of fixed-term exclusions has fallen considerably and is now below the national average. Again the academy has worked effectively with students, and their parents, to discourage students from engaging in activities that would lead to fixed-term exclusions. The strategies to encourage better behaviour, such as the new behaviour policy, have had a positive impact. However, students confirm inspection evidence that not all members of staff apply the policy consistently.

In lessons where students are given challenging and engaging work, they want to learn and they behave well. In the lessons where the students are all given the same work they are not as motivated to behave well. This is because the work for some students is far too easy, and for other students it is too hard.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The senior leaders of the academy, and in particular the headteacher, have put in place a range of well-thought-through strategies to improve the quality of education provided at Danum Academy. The strategies are based on accurate self-evaluation and a thorough knowledge and understanding of the students and what they can achieve. As a result, the staff's expectations of the students are rising, lessons are more challenging, students are making better progress and gaps between the progress made by different groups are closing.

Middle leaders are being held much more to account for the progress made by the students in their subjects. Focused and regular line management meetings mean middle leaders feel supported but also responsible. Middle leaders are much more aware of where the issues are, what needs to change, and how they can work as a team to ensure students make better progress. Middle leaders are also taking more

responsibility for monitoring their departments through 'learning walks', lesson observations, work scrutiny and reviews of data. Both middle and senior leaders are capable of identifying the factors in lessons that hinder and support the students' progress. Leaders use the information from monitoring to identify and provide bespoke training and support for staff. As a result students are making better progress in more subjects across the academy.

The SIB holds the senior leaders to account on a regular and rigorous basis. The SIB is well informed about the progress the students are making, the quality of teaching, attendance and which strategies are making a difference.

External support

There has been a range of external support. Consultants have helped to develop the skills of middle leaders, and as a result middle leaders are more effective. The academy Trust, CfBT, has supported the development of the pastoral year leaders and the inclusion support assistants. As a result they have been more effective in their support of the behaviour policy.