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11 June 2015

Karen Horne  
Principal  
Mansfield Green E-ACT Academy  
Albert Road  
Aston  
Birmingham  
B6 5NH

Dear Mrs Horne

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Mansfield Green E-ACT Academy**

Following my visit with John Daley, Additional Inspector, to your school on 9–10 June 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to 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 Governing Body, the Academies Advisers Unit and the Director of Children’s Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Chair of appropriate authority for Mansfield Green E-ACT Academy

cc. Peter Hay Director of Children's Services for Birmingham

cc. For Academies only Department for Education

CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk

## Annex

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

- Improve the impact of leaders and managers on pupils' achievement by:
  - establishing, as a matter of urgency, leadership structures that ensure the academy has strong and stable senior leadership and governance
  - setting performance targets that reflect high expectations for pupils' achievement and require all teachers to meet the government's Teachers' Standards
  - providing training to help teachers meet the Teachers' Standards
  - ensuring senior leaders frequently check the quality of teaching and hold teachers rigorously to account for its impact on pupils' achievement
  - enabling other leaders to contribute effectively to improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching by making sure teachers:
  - know what standards pupils should be working at for their age and expect pupils to achieve these
  - have a detailed understanding of what pupils can do and what skills each pupil needs to do next
  - plan lessons that focus on teaching the skills pupils need to develop, rather than merely completing a task
  - make good use of teaching assistants' time so that they consistently support pupils to make good progress
  - use questions to probe pupils' understanding or to challenge them in their thinking
  - check how well pupils are learning in lessons and modify the lesson accordingly to ensure progress is swift
  - give quality feedback in lessons and when marking pupils' work, to help address pupils' misunderstandings and help them improve further.
- Ensure pupils achieve well in reading, writing, spoken communication and mathematics, so they can succeed in the next stage of their education by:
  - identifying accurately gaps in pupils' knowledge in phonics, mathematics and writing skills
  - building pupils' phonic knowledge systematically and swiftly across Years 1 and 2
  - helping pupils to understand and enjoy many different types of books
  - providing structures opportunities for pupils to learn how to communicate confidently and clearly using spoken language
  - ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants model high quality spoken and

- written English to pupils at all times
- giving pupils plenty of opportunities to practise and apply writing skills in English lessons and in different subjects
  - helping pupils to master mathematical understanding by applying their knowledge about numbers to different situations in mathematics lessons and in other subjects.
- Ensure disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well by ensuring that:
- pupils' needs are identified accurately
  - teachers understand pupils' needs and use appropriate strategies to support them in lessons
  - additional support given through small group or individual teaching helps pupils overcome their difficulties and does not merely focus on repeating work they have already struggled with.

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

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 9–10 June 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, the acting executive principal and other senior members of staff, the Chair and other members of the Governing Body, representatives of the academy's sponsor, E-ACT, and a group of teachers. An inspector also held a discussion with a group of pupils.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, one teacher has left the academy and two teachers have stepped down from their posts of responsibility. Four teachers have tendered their resignation and will leave at the end of the summer term.

The head of school has been designated principal, and an assistant vice principal has been appointed to the post of vice principal. The executive principal who had oversight of both Mansfield Green and the sister academy, Nechells, has resigned his post. A system leader who was already working with Mansfield Green has taken the post of acting executive principal.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Pupils' achievement is improving across the school. Work in pupils' books shows that they are making better progress in lessons. The academy's assessments show that the proportion of pupils who are making progress at the rate that is expected of them is increasing. The improvements are patchy, however, and there are variations between classes and in different subjects, and between different groups of pupils. This reflects the uneven quality of teaching.

Attainment remains low in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the proportion of pupils working at the level expected for their age is increasing, and the gap between the attainment of pupils at Mansfield Green and pupils nationally is set to reduce. For example, more children are on track to reach a good level of development by the end of Reception than at this time last year. Similarly, the proportions of pupils expected to attain the levels expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are also greater than last year. The proportion of pupils attaining higher than expected levels has not improved substantially and is likely to remain well below that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

Since the academy was placed in special measures, a great deal of effort has been put into boosting the attainment and progress of the pupils in Year 6 in order to give them the best possible chance in the tests and assessments, and to prepare them for secondary school. Interventions have been numerous and tailored to individual pupils' learning needs. However, this group of pupils had much ground to make up.

Their starting points in January this year were very low, and many had not made the progress they should have across Key Stage 2. Although many pupils have made faster progress recently, only just over two thirds of pupils are on track to reach Level 4 in all three of reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils making expected progress across the whole of Key Stage 2 does not match the proportions seen nationally last year.

The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving. This is as a result of interventions and strategies that are more accurately focused on their particular learning needs. The gap between the attainment of this group of pupils and others in the school is beginning to reduce.

The local authority and other external bodies checked the academy's assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 to make sure that they were correct. Minimal changes needed to be made. Teachers of pupils in Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 assessed pupils' attainment against the expectations in the new National Curriculum. There is now an accurate baseline against which future progress can be measured.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is improving. Inadequate teaching has been robustly tackled. The next challenge is to make sure that teaching becomes reliably good as quickly as possible.

Scrutiny of pupils' books and observations in classrooms show that teachers are following recently introduced procedures for planning a series of lessons and for marking pupils' work. Teachers said that they understand what is expected of them and appreciate the guidance they are being given. They particularly welcome the new assessment and tracking system because it helps them identify gaps in pupils' learning and is a useful tool to help with planning in future.

In line with the academy's guidance, teachers are beginning to ask more open-ended and probing questions that help promote pupils' reasoning and their speaking skills. Questions such as 'What do you notice?' challenge pupils to look and then articulate their thoughts. However, this agreed approach is not firmly in place and there are too many instances of staff intervening quickly rather than giving pupils time to reflect, to grapple with problems or try things out. In addition, teaching assistants sometimes do too much of the work for the pupils. This illustrates that there is still a focus on the completion of a task rather than the deepening of understanding.

Teachers are not all precise or accurate enough in their planning and marking of pupils' work. They clearly put a lot of effort and time into planning their lessons and into marking. However, there are instances of work being marked as correct when it

is not, and of objectives for learning in lessons that are too broad or which relate to the completion of the task rather than what will be learned. Teachers sometimes accept work that is not well presented, such as shapes drawn in mathematics books using blunt pencils and without the aid of a ruler, or handwriting in English books that is markedly different from the quality in their handwriting practice books. Attention to detail and unfailingly high expectations will be vital if teaching is to continue to improve and boost pupils' achievement to where it needs to be.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the academy. Pupils respond readily to instructions and work happily in collaboration or alongside one another. There are some instances of inattentiveness, especially when the teaching does not fully engage pupils' interest, but this does not adversely affect the learning of others.

The academy's system for rewarding good behaviour and highlighting where it is not good enough is now firmly established. Teachers and other staff are using the system as intended, and pupils say they understand what is expected of them. The analysis of 'good news' and 'bad news' incidents shows a clear increase in the good and a reduction in the bad. The records also show that serious incidents, such as bullying or racist behaviour, are rare.

Attendance rates have risen and are about one and a half percentage points higher than at this time last year. The academy is tenacious in its attempts to reduce levels of persistent absence, but the rate remains stubbornly above last year's national figure. There are clear procedures for following up any unexplained absence. This includes immediately notifying social services and the local authority's 'children missing in education' team should a child who is known to be vulnerable be absent without explanation. There has been only one instance of a missing child since the academy opened. Every attempt, including involving the police, was made to locate the child. It was quickly found that the family had moved to another city and the child was safe.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The decision to establish the posts of principal and vice principal brings greater strength and clarity to the leadership structure and to lines of accountability. The appointments reflect the confidence of the governing body and the sponsor in the ability of the post holders to drive improvements at the pace that is needed. The wider senior leadership team is playing a strong part in leading the academy forward. The new acting executive principal is working well with the principal. It is clear that improving outcomes for the pupils is at the forefront of the academy's work.

The principal's clarity of vision and high expectations are contributing a good deal to the improvements noted earlier. She understands fully what needs to be done to improve teaching and has put into place measures to support teachers in improving their practice, and to hold them to account for the quality of their work. Systems for managing teachers' performance had lapsed. Every teacher now has an individual support plan which makes clear what is expected of them in the interim. A new system is to be implemented in the next academic year.

Stronger leadership of provision for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is promoting better progress for these pupils. There is now a clear understanding of the distinction between underachievement and special educational needs.

The principal and other senior leaders carry out a range of activities to check what is happening in classrooms. Teachers said that they appreciate the on-the-spot feedback that they receive during some of the classroom visits. Monitoring and evaluation activities are becoming a well-established part of the academy's routines.

A lot of work has gone into making sure that the academy's systems and procedures are rigorous and fit for purpose. The required external review of the spending of pupil premium funding has been carried out. As a result, adjustments will be made in the next year, both to make sure that the spending is appropriately targeted on those for whom it is intended and that the impact is measured. The principal has also reviewed the spending of the primary sports funding. She is to make changes to how this funding is used to make sure that it has the desired impact on pupils' take-up and enjoyment of physical activity.

The planned review of governance did not take place because of the unavoidable absence of the reviewer. The review has been rescheduled.

The principal has made sure that the academy has an assessment and tracking system that is straightforward to use and reflects the expectations of the new National Curriculum. The system is already up and running.

The academy's procedures for protecting pupils and keeping them safe have been reviewed and amended in order to reflect current guidance. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding also checked the procedures on behalf of the governing body. The principal has organised refresher training in safeguarding for staff this term, with further training planned for the start of the new academic year. 'Prevent' training, delivered by the local authority, will take place next month for staff and governors.

The academy's plan for improvement is being implemented in a timely way and the impact accurately evaluated.

The academy is rightly focusing strongly on strengthening pupils' basic skills in speaking, reading, writing and mathematics. Other aspects of the curriculum are taught through linked topics. The principal intends to expand the range of clubs and after-school activities in the coming academic year.

The governing body's role in supporting and challenging the academy's leaders is continuing to develop well. The Chair of the Governing Body has a good understanding of the academy's growing strengths and areas for development. She and a parent governor attend all meetings of the sponsor's raising attainment board and are involved in reviewing progress and identifying next steps.

Senior leaders, the governing body and the sponsor all understand that the recruitment of high-quality teachers is crucial for the coming academic year, so that the pace of improvement in teaching does not slow. The response to recent advertisements has been disappointing. The principal is working with the sponsor to seek high-calibre applicants, including from overseas.

### **External support**

The sponsor is providing effective support to Mansfield Green on a number of fronts. It continues to take responsibility for finance and human resources, in order that staff and governors can focus their attention on improving teaching and learning. The raising attainment board keeps the academy's progress under review. It demonstrates for governing body members how to question and challenge, where necessary, the information that is provided for them. Support for improving teaching is being provided through other schools in the E-ACT chain.

The sponsor understands that the original target set for the removal of special measures was unrealistic because it was not based on an accurate understanding of the academy's position. Her Majesty's Inspector agreed that action plans did not need to be rewritten to reflect the amended timescale.

The principal also draws on other sources of expertise and support. She has organised a series of training sessions on the teaching of English and mathematics, using external providers.