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12 June 2015

Lisa Lyon
Headteacher
Mount Gilbert School
Hinkshay Road
Dawley
Telford
TF4 3PP

Dear Mrs Lyon

Special measures monitoring inspection of Mount Gilbert School

Following my visit to your school on 10–11 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. Any appointment of newly qualified teachers cannot be made without first discussing this with me.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Telford and Wrekin.

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel

Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Paul Roberts, Chair of appropriate authority for Mount Gilbert School

cc. Laura Johnston Director of Children's Services for Telford and Wrekin

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that students make the progress of which they are capable, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - assess students' ongoing progress and learning so that they know how well the students are doing
 - provide work that builds well on what students already know, is not too easy or too hard for them and which they find interesting
 - mark students' work and provide written and verbal feedback to students about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

- Improve students' skills in English and mathematics by making sure that:
 - there are high expectations of what students can achieve, particularly in the progress they can make
 - subject and school leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and marking to bring about improvements in teachers' practice.

- Improve students' behaviour and attitudes by:
 - providing a better range of subjects and activities that meet students' needs and interests more effectively so that they attend more often and take better care over their work
 - ensuring that all staff have the skills to support students in their behaviour and are consistent in managing incidents of inappropriate behaviour
 - establishing clear consequences for behaviour that are effective in modifying poor behaviour and reducing fixed-term exclusions
 - strengthening the rewards system further, and its use by staff, so that students are more aware of the advantages of good behaviour
 - ensuring that the new systems for addressing poor attendance have a positive impact on getting students into school and reducing absence.

- Improve leadership and management and governance so that they are effective in bringing about improvements at a rapid pace by ensuring that:
 - checks on the quality of teaching and progress are far more rigorous so that areas for development are identified and tackled quickly
 - the school's plan for improvement identifies the right priorities and sets clear, measurable targets and timelines for improvement
 - procedures for tracking the progress of students are comprehensive and are used to hold staff to account for students' progress where it is not good enough
 - subject leaders have a clear understanding of the progress of students and the strengths and areas for improvement in their subjects
 - governors set school leaders clear targets for improvement and are

- rigorous in checking that these have been achieved
 - checks on the spending of pupil premium funding from the government, and the Year 7 'catch up' funding, are rigorous and that the way funds are used has a positive impact on students' learning.
- Establish more rigorous systems for checking how well students are achieving and how safe they are when they attend off-site courses.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on insert date of inspection

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior and subject leaders. A meeting was held with three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector also met with two representatives from the local authority and the local leader of education (LLE) who is providing support to school leaders. Visits were made to lessons at the main school site and at The Web Centre. The inspector also visited a student attending alternative provision. In addition the inspector spoke to students and staff informally and looked at work in students' books. Documentation was reviewed, including leaders' information about students' progress and records of their checks on the work of teachers. Minutes of meetings of the governing body were also considered.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in March 2015, the business manager has left the school and a new business manager and a part-time technician have joined the school. Two art teachers have left the school. One governor has resigned due to ill-health and two new governors have joined the governing body. Senior leaders and governors have made a number of appointments for September including an English teacher and a science teacher. The headteacher is also making arrangements to share an art teacher with another school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

As a result of continuing improvements in teaching, increasing proportions of students are making expected progress. Some students are making more rapid progress. This is particularly the case in Years 7 and 8 where a nurturing approach and effective teaching have helped students to make a good start in their learning at Mount Gilbert.

Work in students' books confirms that rates of progress in most subjects are starting to accelerate as a result of more effective teaching. An increased focus in most lessons on basic skills in reading and writing including grammar, punctuation and spelling is helping students to make better progress than before. However, progress in mathematics remains slow for many students as a result of less effective teaching over time. Many students struggle to complete calculations accurately and find it difficult to apply their mathematical knowledge in order to solve problems.

Teachers are developing a range of strategies in order to help students catch up on work missed due to absence, including catch-up lessons for individuals and small groups. However, poor attendance continues to have a detrimental impact on progress for many students in Key Stage 4. The headteacher is planning changes to

timetables for September to ensure that students who attend alternative provision do not miss essential learning in school.

While younger students and those in Year 11 generally have a more positive attitude to school and to learning, a number of Year 10 students struggle to manage their behaviour and to concentrate in class. This, coupled with the particularly poor attendance of a number of students, is having a negative impact on the progress of this year group. Leaders recognise this and have adapted provision and support for these students. For example, some of them are taught in small groups at the Web Centre. The impact of these changes on students' progress is not yet clear.

All Year 11 students who were studying for GCSEs and other qualifications have attended and completed the examinations which have taken place so far this term. This represents a significant achievement for many students as tests and examinations cause some of them considerable anxiety. School information indicates that the number of students gaining accredited qualifications this year will be higher than in previous years. For example, a third of students are predicted to achieve five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics. Almost all Year 11 students have secured places at college for September.

The quality of teaching

Teachers' assessment of students' attainment is now more accurate and thorough. Most teachers are now using this information more effectively to plan lessons and to ensure that targets and tasks are personalised for individual students and are at the right level of difficulty. However, occasionally teachers still provide too much support for students or do not provide enough challenge for the most-able students, and this limits their progress.

In most lessons, in a range of subjects, teachers plan and provide good opportunities for students to practise and develop their reading skills. For example, in a food technology lesson students were required to read a recipe to ensure that they had all of the necessary ingredients and resources to make their pizzas. The deputy headteacher, who has responsibility for teaching and learning in English, has ensured that all teachers reinforce and extend students' learning about punctuation, grammar and spelling in different subjects. This is beginning to lead to improvements in students' written work.

Conversely, the deputy headteacher recognises that tasks in some English lessons are not focused well enough on the development of reading and writing skills. Instead these lessons just focus on students' learning about the content of the theme or topic. The deputy headteacher is working with the individual teachers concerned to help them plan and teach literacy skills more effectively.

Teaching in mathematics does not focus sufficiently on the development of students' number and calculation skills. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to use and apply their mathematics knowledge and skills in order to solve different types of problem.

Most teachers explain and demonstrate new learning clearly and use appropriate technical vocabulary. This helps students to make good progress. For example, when teaching students how to build a brick wall for a barbeque, the Design Technology teacher demonstrated how to 'butter' the bricks. Students watched carefully and then practised the technique themselves.

The majority of teachers now consistently follow the school's marking policy. This means that in most classes, students are given clear feedback on what they have done well and on how they can improve their work. However, in older students' mathematics books misconceptions are not always identified and addressed by teachers in their marking and so these misconceptions persist.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of the majority of students continues to improve. During the inspection, almost all students remained in lessons and completed the work set for them. School records indicate that this is typical.

The student support team is helping to de-escalate and/or follow up incidents of disruptive or destructive behaviour. Students know that if they disrupt learning or leave lessons they will have to complete their work in the inclusion room the next day before joining their classmates. These strategies are helping leaders to further reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions. Students say that staff listen to them when they are angry or upset and help them to calm down and make better choices about their own responses in different situations.

When there are incidents of poor behaviour, abusive language or damage to property, staff have a consistent and calm approach which usually helps students to calm down and moderate their behaviour. There has been a continued reduction in the number of incidents where staff have had to physically intervene to keep students safe.

Staff are good role models for students. They model appropriate reactions, apologise to students for misunderstandings and communicate positively with one another. At lunchtime, staff sit and chat with students in the hall while eating their lunch. The atmosphere in the hall at lunchtime during the inspection was calm, relaxed and sociable.

Leaders keep detailed records of all incidents of poor behaviour and there is clear evidence that the number of incidents is declining. However, leaders have identified

that they now need to analyse this information more thoroughly in order to identify patterns and common triggers so that they can plan further improvements and provide additional support for individual students or for particular lessons and activities.

Students' attendance has continued to improve slowly. The attendance of students in Key stage 3 is much better than that of students in Key Stage 4. However, overall attendance remains well below the average for all schools nationally and the proportion of students who are persistently absent remains high. School leaders and governors have renewed their efforts to raise attendance. The headteacher, student support manager and a governor hold regular attendance panel meetings with a local authority education welfare officer to discuss the attendance of individual students whose attendance is poor. A range of strategies, such as home visits, incentives and changes to timetables and provision are considered and tried. This is leading to some success in improving the attendance of individual students. For example, one student has increased his attendance from 50% in the autumn term to 83% in the summer term so far.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and other school leaders and governors remain resolute in their determination that Mount Gilbert will become a good school. Senior leaders continue to make regular checks on the quality of teaching by making visits to lessons and looking at the work in students' books. This means that leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. They use this information well to set targets for teachers then revisit to check that the required improvements are being made. Where additional support is required, the deputy headteacher works closely with individual teachers by engaging in activities such as team teaching and joint planning and marking. This has helped some teachers to improve their practice, which is leading to improvements in students' progress. A small number of teachers continue to receive this targeted support.

Subject leaders have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning in their subject areas. They have developed subject action plans which set out clearly what they are doing to improve teaching and raise students' attainment. Senior leaders effectively hold these leaders to account for their areas of responsibility by meeting with them regularly to discuss the impact of their work.

The assistant headteacher makes regular visits to students attending alternative provision to check on their safety and well-being. She ensures that all adults at each alternative provision have completed all the necessary checks regarding their suitability to work with children. Administration staff from Mount Gilbert check on the attendance of students at alternative provision each day and any absences are followed up in line with the school's usual procedures. The assistant headteacher regularly collects information about students' progress from each alternative

provider. However, sometimes this information is heavily focused on students' engagement and attitudes and does not fully evaluate their learning and progress.

In response to a request from governors, the headteacher has provided them with information about the use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged students. The headteacher and governors recognise that further work is required to enable them to fully evaluate the impact of each initiative on students' achievement and well-being.

Governors visit the school regularly and have a good understanding of current strengths and areas for improvement at Mount Gilbert. They provide appropriate challenge to the headteacher and other leaders by regularly asking questions and requesting further information to help them evaluate students' achievement, the quality of teaching and students' behaviour and safety. Governors have ensured that the intended outcomes set out in the school improvement plan are measurable so that they can evaluate the impact of leaders' work more effectively.

The school's improvement plan is rightly focused on ensuring that all students make at least expected progress. The headteacher is currently considering ways of altering the format of these plans to ensure that they set out more precisely what the school intends to do to tackle the most urgent areas for improvement. These include underachievement in mathematics and the slow progress and persistent absence of many current Year 10 students.

External support

The local authority has a good understanding of the school's current position and recognises the continuing improvements being made by school leaders and governors. The local authority continues to commission the support of an LLE who meets regularly with the headteacher. The LLE provides effective support, for example, by helping the headteacher to develop a new staffing structure and to make suitable appointments and by assisting with further improvements to the curriculum. Since the previous monitoring inspection in March, the local authority has provided suitable support to leaders and teachers to help them develop their approach to assessing students' progress. In addition, a local authority adviser has helped teachers to improve marking in science.

Local authority representatives recognise the impact on the school's attendance data of the non-attendance of a few students who have been placed on the school's role. They acknowledge that school leaders have made every effort to provide suitable timetables and provision for these students. The local authority is working with different agencies and providers to consider the best options for these students.