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12 June 2015

Stephen Munday
The Voyager Academy
Mountsteven Avenue
Walton
Peterborough
PE4 6HX

Dear Mr Munday

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Voyager Academy

Following my visit with Ruth Brock, Her Majesty's Inspector, Sally Lane and Bruce Clark, Additional Inspectors, to your academy 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 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 February 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 academy is not making enough 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Peterborough.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve, their behaviour and how they present their work
 - all students receive high quality feedback about their work
 - academy policies are consistently applied in all classrooms
 - errors in literacy, especially punctuation, spelling and grammar, are corrected in all lessons.

- Improve achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 so that:
 - more-able students attain higher grades in GCSE examinations
 - students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make more rapid progress
 - the wide gap in attainment between students supported through the pupil premium and other students is closed.

- Urgently improve the standard of behaviour so that:
 - lessons are not disrupted, and learning occurs in a calm and orderly environment
 - students are respectful of one another and all staff
 - students arrive punctually to the academy and to all lessons
 - attendance at the academy and in lessons rises swiftly
 - the academy's revised behaviour code is adhered to consistently.

- Improve leadership and management so that:
 - senior leaders take responsibility for setting and maintaining high expectations of behaviour
 - senior leaders spend much more of their time ensuring that lessons are not disrupted and that incidences of poor behaviour are tackled swiftly
 - more is done to support and improve teaching throughout the academy
 - leaders at all levels, including governors, work collaboratively to bring about the necessary improvements.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 10–11 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive principal, the newly appointed substantive principal, other senior and middle leaders, two members of the governing body, three groups of students and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, a new, permanent principal has been appointed and will take over the leadership of the academy in July 2015. The current executive principal will continue to support the school as chief executive of the Comberton Academy Trust. Some specialist staff from within the sponsor trust are deployed within the academy to lead the mathematics department and to work alongside academy leaders and managers to aid improvement. New appointments have been made to lead modern foreign languages and history. A new leader of mathematics will join the academy in September 2015. Pastoral leaders have been reorganised to take responsibility for each year group rather than for colleges of students.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Senior leaders have rightly prioritised preparing students in Year 11 for examinations this summer by providing them with suitable revision sessions after school, at weekends and during holiday periods. Timetables have been amended to give some of these students more time to study English, mathematics and science. The academy's latest data suggests the percentage of Year 11 students likely to attain five or more GCSE C grades including English and mathematics will rise to 42% this year. Data also shows that most of these students continue to make at least expected progress in English but fewer students make expected progress in mathematics.

The academy's data indicates that the progress made by students eligible for the pupil premium is improving and that gaps in attainment between them and other students in the academy will narrow this year in English and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics.

Senior leaders have taken steps to extend the academy's monitoring procedures into Year 10 to gauge how well students are progressing. Current data indicates a similar picture to Year 11: students are making better progress in English than they are in mathematics. The percentage due to attain five or more C grades including English and mathematics next year is expected to be higher than that achieved this year.

Students in Year 10 shared their own perceptions of the progress they feel they are currently making. A small group of them told inspectors that they feel they are not making enough progress, particularly in mathematics and science. Some say they are 'going backwards'. They feel that the reason for this is that, in some subjects, the quality of teaching is not good enough.

The progress made by students in Key Stage 3 remains a concern. The quality of teaching is not enabling students to progress well enough. The most effective teachers have been deployed to accelerate progress in Key Stage 4, and the lack of a coherent plan to promote students' literacy in subjects other than English means that, for many of them, their basic skills remain underdeveloped. Classrooms are expected to display 'literacy walls' to promote students' understanding but this is not consistent.

Not all teachers' planning meets the learning needs of students who speak English as an additional language. Not enough support is provided for these students in lessons. This means that, in too many lessons, these students make little progress.

The quality of teaching

Lesson monitoring by senior leaders suggests that a higher proportion of teaching is enabling students to make good progress. Observations by inspectors did not support this. They found that in some subjects the quality of teaching is improving, but overall it remains too inconsistent. Far too much of it is still inadequate or requires improvement. Not all teachers apply the academy's policy to manage students' behaviour in lessons. Scrutinising students' books in a range of subjects confirmed that some improvements are being made, but over time, teaching is not leading to good learning and progress. Too often, work is incomplete, insufficient and poorly presented.

In lesson observations, most teachers shared seating plans, lesson planning and assessment data with inspectors. However, not all teachers are using this information to plan learning matched to students' different abilities or backgrounds. Some teachers clearly are doing this but others were observed not to be doing this effectively. In too many lessons, the starting points of students who speak English as an additional language is not considered fully by teachers. Consequently, a high proportion of these students struggle to engage in learning because they do not understand what they have to do. This issue was raised at the time of the last monitoring inspection but little has been done to improve it.

Marking of students' work is beginning to show some improvement. The majority of teachers are taking time to check students' understanding and provide them with detailed feedback about how to improve their work. Where teaching is most effective, teachers highlight basic errors in spelling and grammar, and expect

students to correct them. Increasingly, in practical subjects, video is used effectively to provide students with good-quality feedback about their performance.

Inspectors did observe some very effective teaching, particularly by teachers that have recently joined the academy. In mathematics, suitably challenging tasks and group discussion led to students making good progress. Some detailed marking of work has provided students with clear advice to improve their work. In science, practical tasks involving microscopes, and good questioning to stimulate students' thinking, led to good progress being made.

Where teaching is most effective, students behave well and make good progress. For example, in modern foreign languages, students make good progress because most teachers are well organised and manage behaviour well. Activities are planned to engage all students, stimulate their interest and make learning fun. Tasks in pairs and small groups encourage students to talk together to develop their speaking and listening skills, and develop their use of English.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Procedures to monitor students' lateness, behaviour and attendance are becoming more systematic, and this is leading to improvement. Most students understand the consequences of arriving late, misbehaving in lessons and not attending regularly. Senior leaders have a range of data to show that, since the last inspection, behaviour is much improved and the academy is a calmer, safer place to be.

Observations by inspectors confirmed this. Most students gather in friendship groups during breaks and lunchtimes, and socialise well. The proportions of students removed from lessons or temporarily excluded from the academy due to poor behaviour are falling. There have been no permanent exclusions since the last monitoring inspection.

There are fewer incidents of serious misbehaviour in the academy. Arrangements to educate off-site a small minority of Year 11 students who regularly misbehave or are at risk of exclusion have contributed towards this. These arrangements have been effective in the short term in improving these students' attendance and progress, and in enabling other students on the academy's main site to learn in a safe environment without their learning being disrupted. However, these arrangements do not provide a long-term solution to managing behaviour. Currently, the accommodation is not fully fit for purpose and the quality of provision does not match that provided in the main academy.

Despite these improvements, some students in Years 9 and 10 voice concerns about the behaviour of a minority of students outside of lessons. Not all of them feel completely safe and free from bullying. Students feel that incidents of physical bullying and name-calling are not fully resolved by staff. Inspectors noted few

incidents of poor behaviour but found that too many students display casual attitudes towards learning and are unwilling to work hard for sustained periods of time. During the inspection, very few enrichment activities were provided during and after the school day to engage students fully and develop their interests.

When asked, all Year 9 and 10 students who met with inspectors said their learning had been disrupted at least once this week by a small minority of poorly behaved students in lessons. They say that some teachers give these students too many chances, rather than dealing with them promptly. This is undermining the efforts of the majority of teachers who do apply the academy's agreed procedures to manage students' behaviour.

Routine monitoring and decisive action to get students who are regularly absent back into the academy is leading to improvement. Persistent absence rates are falling. Overall attendance is close to that found nationally, although attendance during the two days of inspection was low. Most students arrive on time at the start of the day but are far less punctual in getting to lessons on time, particularly after lunchtime.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders have prioritised improving students' behaviour and attendance, and making the academy a more positive environment in which to learn. It is a calmer, more orderly place, and this is enabling students and staff to work more purposefully. Far fewer complaints have been received, and suitable procedures are in place to handle issues raised by parents and carers.

Leaders have been less effective in dealing with some important issues raised at the last monitoring inspection, and especially in improving the quality of teaching. Some actions to improve the academy have taken place but other important actions remain at the planning stage. A lack of urgency in securing improvements in these areas means that, at this stage, the academy is not making the progress it should be towards the removal of special measures. Actions remain at the planning stage to strengthen students' basic literacy, improve provision for those who speak English as an additional language, and ensure that disadvantaged students achieve well.

Fundamental weaknesses in the quality of teaching have not been tackled systematically to eradicate ineffective teaching and make teaching consistently good. Plans are in place to eradicate all inadequate teaching by the end of this term. Senior and middle leaders are not ensuring that teaching is sufficiently robust to ensure that all students behave well enough and make sufficient progress.

Improvement plans prioritise the main areas requiring improvement but are not focused sharply on improving day-to-day teaching in all subjects, or holding leaders and managers at all levels to account for securing rapid improvements.

Changes have been made to the leadership and management of the student support and special educational needs department. This includes the appointment of an assistant coordinator to share the workload and improve the quality of support provided for students. Students who speak English as an additional language that arrive in the academy mid-way through the year are placed in lower sets to gain some initial support with reading, speaking and listening. However, this support is minimal and is not maintained over time in any coordinated, systematic way to ensure that these students are able to access the full curriculum.

The deployment of teaching assistants in lessons requires further improvement because, in too many lessons, students do not receive enough additional support. It is unclear how the performance of teaching assistants is managed to ensure that they make a full contribution to raising achievement.

Safeguarding procedures, including the single central record, are suitably maintained. Concern raised by staff about students' care and safety are recorded in detail and investigated fully with parents, carers and external agencies by pastoral staff.

The governing body has acted decisively to secure greater leadership capacity by appointing an experienced substantive principal. He has already spent time in the academy and is beginning to formulate his own plans for improvement.

Minutes of meetings shows that the governing body continues to provide support and challenge through its inner-strategy group to stimulate further action to improve. Important questions are being asked about the quality of teaching, the academy's performance and the actions being taken to improve it. However, governors are not responding fast enough to issues raised in previous monitoring inspections. Following the review of pupil premium spending, plans to improve it have been drawn up but have not been implemented. A senior leader has been identified to lead this next term but, at this point, there is no coherent strategy in place for raising the achievement of the academy's most disadvantaged students.

External support

The executive principal is deploying some staff from other academies within the trust to improve the leadership of some subjects, and to evaluate the academy's strengths and weaknesses. However, this has not led to acceleration in the progress being made in resolving all of the issues raised at the last inspection.

Academy leaders continue to work with the local authority to gain advice and training to improve provision. There has been training for staff in improving provision for students who speak English as an additional language but this has not led to a sufficiently clear, over-arching strategy for improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Implement as a matter of urgency the academy's plans to strengthen students' basic literacy and improve the progress of those who speak English as an additional language and those students who are eligible for the pupil premium.