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12 June 2015

Dr Cathy Taylor
Executive Principal
Thomas Ferens Academy
540 Hall Road
Hull
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Dear Dr Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Thomas Ferens Academy

Following my visit with Lesley Butcher, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 10 and 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 third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 City of Kingston upon Hull.

Yours sincerely

Tanya Stuart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Swiftly improve the quality of all teaching so that it is at least consistently good and enables all groups of students to make rapid improvements in achievement, especially in English and mathematics, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what students can achieve to drive up standards for all groups of students so that none underachieves
 - measure the progress and understanding of students regularly and accurately to ascertain when they are ready to move on to their next stage of learning
 - mark students' books regularly in order to provide them with the advice they need to improve their work and learning
 - set high standards for the presentation and organisation of students' work
 - give greater opportunities for students to write at length and, in particular, encourage boys to do so
 - provide regular and effective homework to drive up achievement
 - use the support of teaching assistants more effectively to rapidly improve standards for those students supported by the pupil premium and those with special educational needs.

- Swiftly improve students' behaviour and safety, including their attendance, by developing effective practices to:
 - reduce the number of students who are regularly absent from the academy, particularly those supported by the pupil premium and those with disabilities or special educational needs
 - eradicate bullying so students stay safe and feel safe
 - reduce overall levels of student exclusion from the academy to at least average or better
 - reduce persistent low-level disruption and instances of misbehaviour so that learning improves
 - eradicate incidents of some students' disregard for the safety of others.

- Rapidly improve the impact of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, by ensuring they:
 - eradicate inadequate teaching and improve that which requires improvement
 - develop effective plans and targets for improvement that have a clear measurable focus on improving achievement, the quality of teaching and students' behaviour and safety
 - have a sharper focus on closing gaps in achievement between different groups of students

- raise attainment for those students with special educational needs and ensure the additional government funding is spent effectively to raise the achievement of those students eligible for further support
- ensure that information is analysed effectively to determine the impact of pupil premium spending in raising achievement
- ensure that all subject leaders are fully accountable for and closely check on learning within their subjects, including scrutinising the quality of students' work, in order to accelerate the progress for all students
- take the full range of information available into account, particularly the progress students make over time, when judging the overall quality of teaching
- provide governors with clear responses to their questions at all times to enable them to hold the academy to account for its performance.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with members of the senior leadership team and middle leaders. Inspectors met formally with two groups of students and spoke with students informally at break and lunch times. The Chair of the Governing Body and another governor met with inspectors, as did a group of staff.

The inspection team observed 26 lessons, 20 of which were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team and middle leaders. Short visits were made to two physical education lessons and a series of intervention sessions at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Context

Five teachers left the academy at Easter. The academy is fully staffed for September 2015. Substantive appointments have been made at senior leadership level since the last monitoring visit. The plans for Sirius Academy to sponsor Thomas Ferens Academy are in place and the change of sponsor planned to take place on the 1 September 2015.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Internal data show that the proportion of students who should achieve five A*-C grades at GCSE level, including mathematics and English, will be considerably higher in 2015 than in 2014. The data also show that the proportion of students in each year group making expected progress in English and mathematics is increasing. Although there are still some gaps in the progress made by disadvantaged students and their peers at the academy, these gaps are closing. Much work is being done in all year groups to make sure the gaps continue to close. Bespoke packages are in place for individual students from Year 7 to Year 11. These include work with the KC Stadium on literacy and, in the academy, booster sessions on literacy and numeracy. Intervention sessions are evaluated by the staff involved, the students and parents. This means it is possible to judge the impact of the work, see which actions are the most effective and plan for the next steps.

Students who have special educational needs are making better progress. These students are being supported well in most lessons with work which is tailored to their needs and which allows them to make at least expected progress. In some lessons, teaching assistants work very effectively with both the teacher and the

students to ensure students make the progress required. However, the impact of the work of teaching assistants in lessons is variable.

The quality of teaching

Senior leaders have high expectations of what students can achieve. These high expectations have been communicated clearly to all staff and in many lessons the expectations of what students can achieve are rising. In particular, the expectations of students in a Year 7 boys' physical education lesson were exceptional. The students were expected to improve their literacy, numeracy and their running skills. The students participated and accepted the high expectations, and all made exceptional progress. However, there are still some lessons in which the expectations of students are too low. In these lessons, students are not challenged and, as a result, they do not always make the progress they should.

A new system for measuring the progress students make in lessons was introduced recently. This is enabling staff, and students to see how much progress students are making and what students need to do to make more progress. In some lessons, this system is being used very effectively with staff able to nudge students towards completing more challenging work and make more progress.

The marking of students' work is improving. Academy leaders have instigated new marking practices, and in some subjects, strong practice is helping students to improve their work, and to make better progress over time. Marking practice is strong in English, history, drama and mathematics, less so in some other subject areas. Leaders have introduced guidance to students and teachers regarding expectations of presentation in exercise books. Some students are demonstrating pride in their books, producing work of a good quality and presenting their work well. However, there is much variability with respect to the presentation in books.

More opportunities are in place and being embedded for students to write at length. As a result, Year 10 are more confident about tackling the long answer questions on the GCSE examination papers.

In English and mathematics, homework is set more regularly than in other subjects and this is confirmed by the students. Consequences are in place if homework is not done.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Around the academy students are polite and respectful. They tidy up after themselves at the end of breaks and lunch and there is very little litter left. The students move around the academy in a purposeful manner and the vast majority of students wear their uniform with pride.

The proportion of students attending the academy on a day-to-day basis has increased significantly this academic year and is now broadly in line with the national average. Of particular note is the attendance of students in Year 11, which has increased steadily each half term from September 2014. The attendance of students with special educational needs has risen and is now above the national average. Disadvantaged students are attending much more regularly and their attendance is in line with their peers in the academy. There is a consistent approach to dealing with attendance.

The proportion of students persistently absent from the academy is falling and is approaching the national average. This is because of the improved links with parents and the work of the attendance team.

The work being done on behaviour is focused not only on misbehaviour but the reasons behind the misbehaviour, this means the academy is fully aware of the reasons why students might be repeatedly in trouble and is actively working with these students.

There is now very little bullying. What does happen is dealt with very quickly and effectively. The proportion of students who are excluded is decreasing and is now below the national average.

There is still low-level disruption in some lessons. This is because in these lessons the students are not challenged and they go off task. When the students are given work which challenges them at an appropriate level the students rise to the challenge, behave well and make better progress.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The governing body is fully aware of the progress being made by the students, where the issues are and what changes are being made. This is because of the clear, well thought through action plans, which are reviewed honestly at regular intervals. There is a clear focus on closing the gaps in performance between different groups of students, and these gaps are closing.

Middle leaders are now working strategically, and as a team. They know and understand their roles, and what they need to do to ensure better progress for the students. Middle leaders are held to account by senior leaders in regular meetings which focus on the impact of actions taken. The data the academy holds on the progress made by students is comprehensive, but easy to understand, and allows actions to be taken across the academy when individual students start to fall behind. This proactive approach means the students are receiving a more bespoke education and, as a result, making better progress.

Middle and senior leaders are very aware of the progress made by students in lessons. Leaders can identify the strengths and weaknesses in lessons and feed these back to staff in a sensitive, but accurate way. However, the impact of teaching on the progress made by students over time is not always as accurately determined. The lunchtime teaching and learning sessions are well attended and staff appreciate the opportunity to develop their skills in a supportive atmosphere.

The executive Principal and interim headteacher are focused on ensuring the students at Thomas Ferens Academy receive the best education they can. This vision has been accepted by the middle leaders, the governors, parents and students. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and students are making better progress than last academic year. There has been a shift in the attitudes of the students, instead of misbehaving and disrupting lessons the vast majority of students now want to be involved, and want to achieve.

External support

Sirius Academy is providing the external support for Thomas Ferens Academy. This support has been intense and highly effective. The staff, students and parents all appreciate the changes being made which are ensuring students make better progress and that behaviour has improved and is continuing to improve.