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Colin Boxall
Principal
Grace Academy Coventry
Wigston Road
Coventry
CV2 2RH

Dear Mr Boxall

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grace Academy Coventry

Following my visit with Paul Brown and Elaine Long, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 17–18 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 since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 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 before the next monitoring inspection. Up to two teachers may be appointed to a department having teachers whose students make expected progress, or better, from their starting points.

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 Education Funding Agency, the Academies Advisers Unit, the Chair of the Academy Improvement Board and the Director of Children's Services for Coventry.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the academy so that it is good or better by:
 - ensuring that all teaching motivates and inspires students
 - providing training for temporary teachers to improve their subject knowledge and skills, and ensure that they are well-prepared for their lessons
 - raising expectations of how students behave and what they can achieve
 - ensuring teachers give students opportunities to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills in interesting contexts in a range of subjects
 - making sure that students' work is marked in a way that gives them clear guidance about how it can be improved.

- Improve behaviour and reduce the number of students who are temporarily excluded from school by ensuring that all staff understand and consistently apply the academy's expectations for good behaviour.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the systems for collecting, analysing and acting on data about students' progress are consistently applied across the academy
 - spending of additional government funding (pupil premium) is used effectively to raise the attainment of those pupils it is intended to support
 - staffing is stabilised so that students have greater continuity in their learning
 - all leaders are rigorously held to account for the performance of all groups of students so that they are able to drive forward improvements in teaching, learning and behaviour
 - courses offered to sixth-form students meet their academic needs
 - governors regularly and rigorously hold academy leaders to account for all aspects of performance and check that actions taken are leading to improvements.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 17–18 June 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, inspectors observed students' learning in 35 lessons, 12 of which were jointly observed with academy leaders. A range of subjects were seen. During these observations, inspectors looked at students' work and spoke to them about their learning. Inspectors also spoke informally to students about behaviour, attendance and how they learn how to keep themselves safe. The behaviour of students was observed as they arrived at the academy, at break and lunchtimes, as they left the academy premises at the end of the day and in lessons. Meetings were held with the Principal, academy leaders, a member of the academy improvement board (AIB) and a representative of the sponsor, The Grace Foundation. Discussions were held with members of staff. The views of parents were noted from the 11 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and the 216 responses to the academy's own questionnaire to parents. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the academy's analysis of students' current attainment and progress, monitoring records of the quality of teaching undertaken by academy leaders, and the minutes of the academy improvement board. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including information about students' behaviour, attendance and punctuality, and the academy's procedures to ensure students are kept safe and secure.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in March 2015, redundancy procedures have been completed. A total of 23 staff, 10 of whom are teachers, are leaving the academy at the end of the summer term. All vacant teaching posts have been filled in readiness for the start of the new academic year in September 2015. The academy leadership team has been restructured and now includes three additional Assistant Principal posts with responsibility for literacy, numeracy and science and technology.

The Department for Education carried out a monitoring visit on 19 May 2015. The local authority carried out a numeracy review and support visit on 11 May 2015.

At the time of this inspection, Year 11 and Year 13 students were on examination study leave.

Achievement of pupils at the school

As noted at the time of the last monitoring visit, students' achievement continues to improve. Academy leaders have put in place a range of effective checks to ensure that teachers' assessments of how well students are doing are more accurate than in the past. All the assessments made by the academy have been moderated and found to be accurate by external educational consultants and by leaders from a local outstanding school. Information provided by the academy indicates that a greater

proportion of students than in 2014 are expected to gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including in English and mathematics. These predicted results would put the academy broadly in line with last year's national figures. The information also suggests that the proportion of students making the progress expected of them is in line with national figures in mathematics and above in English. Actions to tackle underachievement in weaker subjects – for example geography and history – have had a positive effect on students' learning.

Gaps between students who are eligible for pupil premium funding (additional government funding for students who are disadvantaged) and their classmates and other students nationally continue to close by the end of Year 11.

Not all disabled students and those who have special educational needs are yet making enough progress. However, academy leaders are aware of this issue and are taking appropriate remedial action.

Students' progress in mathematics, while improving, still lags behind that in English. Students' ability to problem-solve and reason mathematically remains an area for improvement. Academy leaders have recently appointed a member of staff to focus solely on improving students' learning in mathematics and to develop the academy's 'mastery' mathematics curriculum.

Students' progress and attainment continue to improve across all subjects in Year 10 and in Key Stage 3. An increasing number of teachers have higher expectations of what students should know and do and ensure that there is an appropriate level of challenge for all students. However, a small minority of teachers, particularly in science and mathematics, do not sufficiently extend students' knowledge and understanding. Consequently, students in these classes do not make enough progress in their learning.

In the sixth form, students' achievement in Level 3 academic and vocational qualifications continues to improve and is above national figures for vocational subjects. An increased proportion of students are remaining in the sixth form to complete their studies. However, only a very small minority of students achieve an A* to C grade when retaking the GCSE examination in mathematics.

All the Year 11 students attending learning at places away from the academy (alternative provision) have achieved a Level 1 or Level 2 qualification.

The quality of teaching

Students' progress is improving because the quality of teaching continues to improve and a large majority of teaching over time is now good or better. Almost all teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and a majority are able to use this knowledge to plan and deliver lessons that engage and interest students. Teachers who spoke

to inspectors said that their teaching has improved as a result of a variety of appropriate training and support. However, a small minority of teaching still fails to engage and interest students in their learning. As a result, students in these classes are not doing well enough. Academy leaders are taking decisive steps to improve with urgency the quality of teaching and students' learning.

There is greater consistency in students' learning as a result of the reduced number of changes to the staff team. For example, the large majority of teachers follow the academy's policies on providing comments, written and verbal, on the quality of students' work, correcting students' mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar and in ensuring learning time is used effectively to strengthen, deepen and improve students' understanding. However, a small minority of teachers do not check that their feedback helps students to improve their work. In addition, they do not consistently promote high expectations of students' spelling, punctuation, grammar, handwriting, presentation and quantity of work. A very small minority of mathematics teachers fail to identify and correct students' misunderstandings or misconceptions. As a result, students in these classes repeat the same mistakes or are unable to build on and apply their mathematical knowledge to different situations and contexts.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour continues to improve. The large majority of students are polite, friendly and welcoming. Students generally move around the academy in a calm and purposeful way. Information provided by the academy shows that the number of exclusions and incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including racist and homophobic bullying, have declined significantly since the inspection in January 2014. Most parents who completed the academy's questionnaire agree that students' behaviour is appropriate. However, students' behaviour does deteriorate in the lessons where teaching fails to engage, challenge or interest them. In these lessons, students' work is shoddy, incomplete and falls below an acceptable standard. A small minority of teachers fail to challenge students when their work or behaviour is unacceptable.

Attendance overall is improving and the number of students who are persistently absent, missing 15% of lessons, continues to fall. This is the result of rigorous monitoring, intervention and support for students whose attendance falls below academy targets. However, absence and persistent absence levels remain above the national average, particularly in Year 9. Students' attendance at alternative provision is well monitored, and daily checks ensure that these students' attendance is generally at or above students' attendance levels at the academy.

Academy leaders continue to place considerable emphasis on ensuring that students are safe and secure in the academy, at alternative provision and on trips and visits. The academy has focused on helping students understand the risks of grooming, sexual exploitation and radicalisation. This is done through the academy's 'ethos and

values' programme, assemblies, visiting speakers and theatre groups, and links with the police. Leaders follow appropriate procedures when they have concerns about children missing in education or who demonstrate signs of extremist behaviour. The majority of students who spoke to inspectors said that they know how to keep themselves safe and how to resist those who might try to persuade them to be unlawful or antisocial. Almost all parents who responded to the academy's questionnaire agree that their children feel safe at the academy.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Academy leaders are working effectively to ensure that the improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement, behaviour and attendance are sustained and embedded. They acknowledge that inconsistencies remain and are taking appropriate action to reduce variations in the quality of teachers' work. The Principal is now well supported by senior and middle leaders who have well-defined areas of responsibility. Subject leaders are becoming more effective in their work as a result of appropriate training and closer monitoring by senior leaders. There is greater staff stability, and staff morale is higher than in November 2014. Most parents who completed the academy's questionnaire agree that the academy is well led and managed.

Leaders at all levels closely monitor students' progress as a result of better systems to track students' achievement. The Principal has ensured that teachers and leaders are held to account for students' progress in the subjects they teach or lead. However, a minority of leaders do not meticulously evaluate the information they have about students' knowledge, understanding and progress. As a result, some leaders' action plans are not specific in detailing how students' progress, behaviour and attendance will be improved and how the impact of any actions will be monitored and measured. For example, the report on the use of the pupil premium fund describes in detail how the money has been spent but does not fully evaluate the impact of spending on students' achievement and personal development. In addition, leaders, including members of the academy improvement board, have not evaluated the impact of the Year 7 'catch-up' grant (government funding to support Year 7 students not yet at the expected level in English and mathematics). As a result, they cannot say if students below the expected levels in English and mathematics are developing the literacy and numeracy skills typically expected for their age.

The curriculum in the sixth form is now better suited to the abilities of the students. As a result, an increasing number are choosing to join the sixth form. In addition, an increased proportion of students are completing their studies and achieving success in line with their capabilities. All the students leaving the sixth form at the end of their studies have places in further or higher education, training or employment.

Academy leaders judge the quality of teaching accurately, drawing on a range of information; for example, lesson observations and work in students' books. Leaders' analysis of teachers' development needs is used to provide effective training and support.

The academy improvement board continues to provide appropriate and effective challenge to the Principal and other leaders. However, the academy improvement board does not have a clear view of how effectively the Year 7 'catch-up' grant is used to ensure students eligible for the funding are reaching the levels expected of them in English and mathematics.

External support

The academy draws effectively on a range of support from external sources. For example, an education consultant completed a review of the provision for students with special educational needs and the local authority reviewed the impact of the teaching of mathematics.

The sponsor, through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), provides suitable support for teachers and leaders. As a result, students' achievement, behaviour and attendance are improving.