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25 June 2015

Maria Nightingale
The Nuneaton Academy
Radnor Drive
Nuneaton
CV10 7PD

Dear Mrs Nightingale

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Nuneaton Academy

Following my visit with John Burridge, Additional Inspector, and Lynn Kenworthy, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 23–24 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 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 academy 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.

The academy should not appoint any newly qualified teachers 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 Local Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Warwickshire.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford

Her Majesty's Inspector

- cc. Chair of the Governing Body
- cc. Local authority
- cc. The Secretary of State
- cc. The Education Funding Agency (EFA)

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, and so raise achievement, especially in mathematics and science, by ensuring that:
 - students are given activities which interest and challenge them
 - teachers have high expectations of students and ensure that they take pride in their work and complete all tasks set, including homework
 - the marking of students' work gives them clear guidance on how to improve, in accordance with the academy's marking policy
 - teachers use data on students' current progress to ensure that the work they set is always hard enough to move their learning forward.

- Improve the behaviour of students by:
 - ensuring that less learning is disrupted by off-task behaviour in lessons and the amount of time spent by senior staff responding to incidents is reduced
 - improving the attendance of students in those groups where it is below the national average.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance by:
 - ensuring that new leaders and teachers clearly understand their roles and responsibilities through an effective induction programme
 - ensuring that all leaders receive training to become more effective in monitoring the quality of teaching
 - ensuring that policies and procedures are more consistently applied across the academy
 - monitoring more closely the impact of the pupil premium funding on improving the achievement of eligible pupils.

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 also be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 23–24 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other senior leaders, middle leaders, a group of subject teachers groups of pupils, the Chair and other members of the Local Governing Body and representatives from the multi-academy trust sponsoring the academy.

Context

Since my last visit, you have strengthened the leadership team through the appointment of a new Vice Principal with responsibility for assessment. A Vice Principal to lead on behaviour is due to start at the academy on 1 July. As part of the reorganisation of leadership for September, a Vice Principal has been appointed with responsibility for teaching and learning. You have also appointed several new subject teachers, which has reduced the number of temporary staff in the academy.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement has continued to improve in all year groups. As a result of rigorous assessment and external validation, you are now confident that the number of students achieving five GCSEs including English and mathematics at A* to C grades will at least meet the government's floor standards this year. This will represent a significant rise in achievement. However, despite a considerable rise in the rates of progress in mathematics, it remains the case that further improvement is required to ensure that academy students reach national standards in this subject.

In Key Stage 3, you have had a notable impact on reducing the number of students who make little or no progress. However, we agreed that there remain too many who fall just short of expected rates of progress, particularly in Year 9. We agreed that the academy's detailed tracking of all students now needs to focus on determining precisely which individual students are not making the accelerated progress required, as well as which groups require further support. You have already trialled an enhanced system of monitoring progress in this way, and this is due to be rolled out across the academy before the end of the term to ensure that it is established for the new academic year. We also agreed that the level of challenge within the bands used by the academy for tracking rates of progress could be usefully raised to promote the accelerated progress you have prioritised.

Gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and others in the academy are narrowing. In Year 11, these students have made more rapid progress than others in the academy, resulting in a significant reduction in the attainment gap. Similarly, such gaps are also closing in Years 7 to 10, although this is variable across the year groups. We agreed that careful evaluation of the impact of additional support should be shared more routinely to ensure that such variability is reduced.

A lot of work has been done to develop better provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. The systems to support this are now established. However, these recent changes have not yet had the required impact on achievement for this group of students.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving, particularly among permanent staff, and inspectors noted an increase in the number of lessons where students made good progress. You agreed that there are still issues with the quality of teaching of temporary staff, particularly where these change frequently. However, the number of such staff has reduced this term, and new staff have already had an impact on improving the overall quality of teaching, particularly in science. In addition, the systems put in place to support supply teachers in understanding and applying academy policies have begun to have some impact. Crucially, the rigorous recruitment programme has ensured that, for the first time in a number of years, in September almost all staff will be permanent.

In the most effective lessons, teachers are using assessment information to plan activities that cater for students' different capabilities, demonstrating a very thorough awareness of students' starting points and gaps in their understanding. In these lessons, teachers regularly check students' progress and adapt their teaching if required. This is particularly notable in more practical areas of the curriculum or when teachers ensure that students are active in their learning. In lessons such as these, students often make good progress; for instance in physical education, science, health and social care, and Spanish. However, we agreed that this is not always the case because, although all teachers are now using assessment information to track progress of individuals and groups, not all are using it to plan appropriate activities. Consequently, the level of challenge for more-able students is often too low and, in some cases, less-able students struggle to understand, and so make less progress than they should.

Nearly all teachers are marking work regularly and the majority of permanent staff are providing useful advice for improvement. Where students have had several supply teachers over the year, they have had less useful feedback and are therefore less clear about how to make progress in these subjects. Nonetheless, all students know what their targets are and whether they are on track to achieve them. We discussed and agreed that a common format for written feedback across the academy would be useful and would enable senior and middle leaders to monitor the quality of marking more effectively.

Teaching assistants make a good contribution to lessons. They support students well, helping them to become more resilient and maintain their engagement with learning where they are experiencing difficulties. Examples were seen by inspectors of teaching assistants using questioning very effectively to help students develop

their own thinking and responses, so that they were confident to participate in discussion activities.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Since my last visit, you have made progress in establishing the new behaviour policy. All staff and students understand how this works and the expectations for high standards of behaviour. Recording of behaviour incidents is now much more detailed and rigorous than under the previous system. Behaviour logs are analysed frequently to identify patterns or potential issues to ensure that these can be addressed rapidly. Analysis shows that the majority of behaviour incidents occur in lessons taught by temporary teachers. Students agree with this assessment, and you acknowledge that there is still some inconsistency in all teachers challenging low-level disruption appropriately. Students say that, although such behaviour is reducing, there is a small but significant group who do not yet 'buy in' to the notion that they are at the academy to learn. They say that this group tend to alter their behaviour according to who is teaching them. Inspectors also noted this.

Behaviour around the academy is largely calm and orderly. Students arrive happily, and depart in the same manner. A few instances of silly behaviour or boisterous behaviour were seen, but these do not characterise the academy. Good relationships between students, and between students and staff, were noted by inspectors. Students trust their teachers and support staff to listen to them and to help them if they have problems.

Students say that they feel very safe at the academy. They talk confidently of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including online. They are well versed in the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, and spoke of the assemblies and workshops provided by the academy to ensure they fully understand the full range of risks.

Attendance remains a priority for improvement. A recent focus on truancy has had a positive impact on reducing such incidents. New, rigorous systems are now established for recording and tracking of absentees. However, substantial impact on absence overall is yet to be achieved. We agreed that too many students are late to lessons, particularly between lessons, and not all staff are rigorous enough in challenging late arrivals.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since my last visit, when the senior leadership team had been destabilised by unexpected departures of key members, you and the academy trust have worked to successfully source and make appropriate appointments. Consequently, you have been able to re-focus on the priorities that were delayed last term. Succession planning for September has been very carefully thought out, and the leadership

structure is well designed to ensure appropriate support for the new Operational Principal. The changes have been shared with stakeholders, and the response has been exceptionally positive from students, staff and parents, who appreciate the efforts made to ensure consistency and stability through the appointment of the current Vice Principal to this post.

The greater involvement of middle leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning has continued. Teachers are now held to account more effectively as a result of the cycle of activities undertaken by subject leaders on a frequent basis. Consequently, subject leaders have a much more accurate view of the progress students are making in their subjects and where intervention is required. However, there is not yet a whole-academy approach to next steps where this process identifies underperformance of staff, including how and when to report such situations. We agreed that this needs to be clarified, including precisely what evidence subject leaders should have collected before taking such steps.

Leadership of the sixth form has continued to improve. The decisive action taken to further develop provision, as well as the rigour of on-going assessment this year, has had a positive impact on the progress made by students. Consequently, the academy is expecting a substantial increase in the number of students attaining the higher grades at A level.

The revised curriculum to meet the requirements of Progress 8 is now in place. All students have the opportunity to access pathways that are appropriate to their needs. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that students are well equipped to make appropriate choices.

You have now mapped spiritual, moral, social and cultural development opportunities across the curriculum, and inspectors saw evidence that teachers are beginning to plan effectively for this. In addition, a range of activities are provided to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including assemblies, enrichment days, workshops, charitable activities, visits to public institutions and academy-based activities such as a mock election. Recently, you have secured weekly support from a chaplain, which has already had a positive impact.

Safeguarding is rigorous. Detailed records are kept of all potential safeguarding incidents, as well as referrals. No student is taken off roll until their whereabouts is established, and the academy works effectively with the local authority to locate those students for whom they do not have a destination. All staff are trained appropriately, including the designated leads, and are aware of what to do if a disclosure is made by a student. 'Prevent' training has taken place, and a number of student workshops and assemblies have been provided to ensure that students are well informed and aware of risks.

The academy's own evidence of parental views shows a more positive picture than that on Parent View. This is particularly the case for parents of younger students at the academy. You and your leaders are focusing on improving parental engagement, recognising this as key to further improving students' attitudes to school and learning.

Governors have worked hard to improve their understanding of data in order to ensure that they challenge leaders appropriately. This is well documented in minutes and there is a clear line of question, response and action that demonstrates the increased level of well-informed challenge. Consequently, governors have a good understanding of where the academy has made progress and where priorities are, including where progress now needs to be accelerated.

External support

The academy trust has continued to support the improvement effectively, particularly in ensuring that staffing is stabilised through effective recruitment. Careful consideration has been given to ensuring that appropriate support structures are in place in September for the new Operational Principal.