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Rabbi Yochanon Goldblatt
Principal
Beis Yaakov High School
69 Broom Lane
Salford
Greater Manchester
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Dear Rabbi Goldblatt

Special measures monitoring inspection of Beis Yaakov High School

Following my visit with John Nixon, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 1 and 2 July 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 second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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.

I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to 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 Salford.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - urgently addressing all deficiencies in safeguarding practices to eliminate any potential risks to students
 - establishing transparent procedures for recording all expenditure so that governors and school leaders can readily account for how funding has been spent
 - tackling with urgency identified weaknesses at senior leadership level and ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clear
 - undertaking a full and comprehensive review of all roles and responsibilities across the school
 - ensuring all recruitment complies with recommended guidelines for ensuring equality of opportunity
 - ensuring all middle leaders are robustly held to account for performance in their area of responsibility
 - improving the quality of self-evaluation and development planning so that school leaders have an accurate picture regarding the overall effectiveness of the school and plans for improvement have clear, measurable success criteria.

- Improve the curriculum by:
 - ensuring students can choose from a wider range of academic qualifications
 - providing objective information, advice and guidance to students so that they can make informed choices about the next stages in their lives
 - reviewing the school's current provision for students' personal, social and health education so that students can assess risks they may meet in a variety of situations outside school.

- Improve students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that they are better prepared for life in modern Britain.

- Improve the small proportion of weaker teaching that exists at present by ensuring all teachers adapt their lessons more effectively to meet the needs of the less able students so that they make better progress.

- Raise attendance by working more effectively with parents so that all parents comply with the school's policy on attendance and do not withdraw their child from school other than for authorised reasons.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate recommends that newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 July 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other senior staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative group of governors and the finance officer. A group of students was also interviewed. Meetings were held with a national leader of education (NLE) and a consultant experienced in the administration of academies, both of whom are supporting the academy's improvement. Discussions also took place with two newly appointed middle leaders. A representative from the local authority, from which the academy also draws support, was contacted by telephone. Inspectors visited lessons in a variety of subjects and age groups, as well as an assembly. It was not possible to observe Year 11 classes because of GCSE examinations. Inspectors scrutinised a range of relevant documentation, including records of performance management, the academy's self-evaluation and action plan. Fifty-five responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and four emails and letters from parents and members of the public were also considered.

Context

No staff have joined or left the academy since the previous monitoring inspection. As part of the recent restructuring of the staff, a new deputy Principal and three new heads of faculty have been internally appointed.

Achievement of students at the school

Records held by the academy show that students' outcomes in the 2015 GCSE examinations, overall, are likely to remain strong but may dip slightly. The Principal, senior leaders and governors have identified the reason as some underachievement among a very few students who have special educational needs and particularly challenging personal issues. The academy has quickly reviewed and intensified support for this group. Inspection evidence, confirms that, overall, students, including the most able and the very small number of those who are disadvantaged, continue to make strong progress from their starting points. No difference was noted during the inspection between the progress of different groups of students or year groups.

The quality of teaching

Teaching seen during the inspection, including in planning and students' books, was consistently of high quality, both in National Curriculum subjects and Jewish Studies, and remains a strength of the academy. Some aspects of teaching are excellent. Students are highly motivated to learn, partly because teachers link the academy's faith-based ethos to learning throughout the curriculum. This contributes to the very high expectations students have of themselves and of their teachers. They challenge each other unreservedly but respectfully, as fellow professionals. The best teachers

are passionate about their subjects and find innovative ways of helping students to apply the learning to their own daily lives and faith. The best teaching occurs when teachers confidently adjust their plans to seize spontaneous opportunities to respond to sophisticated ideas and questioning from students. They do this skilfully, never losing sight of the particular focus of their teaching. For example, in an information and communication technology lesson, a reference to the internet became a deep moral and social debate about the risks and benefits of internet use. This engaged and enthused students greatly, as well as reinforcing key messages about e-safety.

Senior leaders and governors take swift action to support or challenge teachers on the very few occasions when teaching requires improvement. However, the academy recognises that documentation for performance management needs still further refinement in order to be more coherent. Senior leaders are also aware that in some subjects, the deployment of teaching assistants could be more effective.

Behaviour and safety of students

The behaviour of all students seen during the inspection was never less than impeccable in the academy building and grounds. Students are unfailingly polite to each other and their teachers, and interact eagerly and confidently with visiting adults. Letters and emails received during the inspection from the surrounding community and other members of the public confirm these high standards. The 55 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were overwhelmingly satisfied with all aspects of the academy's work, including its leadership and management. This response, through a very challenging period, attests to the very strong relationships that the Principal and senior leaders maintain with their parent body.

Senior leaders have taken a much firmer approach where students are persistently absent, with the result that their attendance has improved significantly. Senior leaders recognise that overall attendance is still not high enough and are working effectively with the local Educational Welfare Officer on a range of strategies to improve it.

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is exceptional and a strength of the academy. It is supported through all subjects and carefully mapped. Students greatly appreciate the academy's new weekly focus on world-wide current events. Students feel particularly well supported by their 'mechaneches' or advisors, who can help them with any problems they may have in the academy or at home. All students in Key Stage 4 and many in Key Stage 3 have a post of responsibility within the academy and they relish these. Many relate to community projects, such as visits to or older people and charitable fund raising for world disasters. Students also organise celebrations of Jewish festivals and Armistice Day commemorations. This contributes very effectively to their already strong knowledge and understanding of democracy, the rule of law and values of tolerance and individual freedom. Students are therefore very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Students have strong, well-articulated opinions and they are encouraged in all subjects to express them. The quality of assemblies is high, for example, when the principal explored with Year 10 students some deep concepts in links between faith and science. This promoted strong engagement with the issues and challenging questions from students, such as 'how does this reconcile with six days of creation?' Work in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) contributes very effectively to students' ability to lead safe and healthy lives. Students are very aware of the range of risks they may encounter and senior leaders are engaging readily with parents to deliver more sensitive messages appropriately. The PSHE provision is currently under review to ensure that it is mapped equally coherently through all subjects.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The Principal, senior leaders and governors continue to work with tireless determination to improve the academy. They all share with the community a very strong and ambitious vision for the academy's future. Senior leaders' self evaluation is honest and accurate and reflects their knowledge of the academy's strengths and priorities for the next stage of its improvement. The Principal senior leaders and governors are moving speedily through the academy's action plan, which tracks the academy's progress against the recommendations from the last section 5 inspection. This is because senior leaders and governors have heeded expert advice in undertaking a wide-ranging review of all policies and procedures and this has now begun to show impact. For example, the recent restructuring of the staff has enabled some strong appointments at senior and middle level and these add much to the academy's capacity to improve further. These appointments were the first made under the academy's new arrangements for recruitment. These are now transparent and fair, meeting all requirements in respect of equal opportunities. Governors must now ensure that all policies are shared in line with statutory requirements.

The appointment of a leader to strengthen the Kodesh (Jewish studies) curriculum has not yet proved possible, but the Principal and governors are exploring ways of filling this important post. Policies and procedures for finance have also been reviewed. An impressive new system of very strong and transparent financial management is currently awaiting adoption by the governing body.

The Principal, senior leaders and governors have made some wise decisions to provide a better balance between the secular and Jewish studies curricula. For example, some curriculum time has been reallocated, so that the range of subjects offered from September 2015 will secure for all students an appropriate progression route into the further study and career of their choice.

Students are delighted with the improved arrangements for careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG.) A knowledgeable and enthusiastic teacher and useful materials are now regularly available to students when they need information about study pathways for their chosen future career. Planning for visits to relevant careers

events is well in hand. During the inspection, inspectors saw an engineering competition led by experts from a range of professional backgrounds, including universities and the armed forces. Students greatly enjoyed exploring solutions to practical science and engineering problems. The objectivity of the academy's CIAG is ensured through links with independent advisors.

Governors continue to be indefatigable in their commitment to improving the academy and their own contribution within it, for example, by making further visits to a local teaching school to observe good practice. Governors have also engaged very effectively with members of the local community and this is reflected in the strong support for the academy noted above. Governors have made very robust challenges to senior leaders of the academy, especially through a small core group. They have been very actively involved in many aspects of and changes to the academy's work and this has borne fruit.

For the next stage of improvement, governors should urgently complete the restructuring of their committees and maintain their action plan. This will enable governors to draw on information from the committees and track the progress of improvements from a strategic rather than an operational standpoint.

External support

The Principal, senior leaders and governors have made carefully considered choices about the external support that the academy needs, wisely maintaining productive links with the local authority, other schools and faith-based networks. The NLE, who is a headteacher of a local teaching school, continues to provide excellent support for the academy, notably in sharing models of effective policies and procedures, as well as hosting visits from governors and staff to see good practice. She knows very well the academy's strengths and priorities for improvement and is a critical friend to the Principal and the governors. The academy has also engaged the services of an expert consultant in academy administration, ensuring that changes to policies and procedures are in line with good practice in academies. The local authority is also strongly committed to the academy's improvement.