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Mrs Jeanette Saw
Headteacher
Audenshaw School Academy Trust
Hazel Street
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Manchester
M34 5NB

Dear Mrs Saw

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Audenshaw School Academy Trust

Following my visit to your school on 6 July 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

This visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in October 2014. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection the governors have now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Executive Director for Tameside and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in mathematics and science, so that it is always at least good by ensuring that:
 - the assessment of students' progress is used effectively to plan learning and set students more aspirational targets so that activities in lessons are always well matched to students' individual needs
 - teachers' marking of students' work always provides students with clear and specific guidance on what they have to do to improve and that teachers' written comments are always followed up by students
 - where used, pair and group work are planned effectively so as to maximise learning opportunities
 - teachers' questioning effectively develops students' understanding and helps them to reflect on what they have learnt.

- Improve achievement rapidly, especially at GCSE level in science and mathematics and at GCE A-level in the sixth form, by ensuring that:
 - the most able students are sufficiently challenged by work that is matched to their needs, abilities and aspirations
 - the gap in attainment and progress between disadvantaged students and their peers closes more rapidly
 - data to monitor progress are robust and reliable.

- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
 - senior and middle leadership continue to strengthen their efforts to promote high quality teaching and learning across all subjects in order to raise achievement more rapidly
 - the role of subject leaders is further developed so that they have a more proactive part in evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility and across the wider curriculum
 - best practice in teaching across the curriculum is shared in a systematic way and includes a focus on evaluating its impact
 - greater stability in staff in science and mathematics enables the delivery of high quality teaching.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 6 July 2015

Evidence

The inspector held separate meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, senior leaders responsible for the quality of teaching and learning, behaviour, attendance and students' achievement. The inspector also met with a group of middle leaders, two members of the governing body and a group of Year 9 students. The inspector was accompanied by an assistant headteacher when he made a number of short visits to lessons. The inspector scrutinised the work in a sample of students' books, to evaluate the quality of marking and the standard of work. He examined a number of school documents including the school development plan, the school's most up-to-date attainment and progress data, the school's records relating to students' attendance and the behaviour log. The governors' revised, post-Ofsted statement of action, the school's records for teachers' performance management and the record of the checks made, on behalf of governors, on the suitability of adults to work with children and young people were scrutinised. The inspector perused the school's latest newsletter to parents and the school's current newsletter showcasing students' work. The inspector had a telephone conversation with the national leader of education, who is supporting senior leaders as they deliver the priorities in the school development plan.

At this visit, the inspector focused on the following aspects of the school's work specifically relating to Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4:

- the attainment and progress of students
- the quality of teaching and learning
- the role of middle leaders in promoting high standards
- the work of the governing body and, in particular, their ability to hold leaders and managers to account.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, senior leaders have revised the school timetable. As a result, the 'split' midday break has been removed and all students now have their lunch at the same time. A number of teachers are to leave the school at the end of the summer term with the resulting vacancies being filled by new staff in September. These teachers will be joining the following subject departments: design and technology; English; geography; history; mathematics; religious education and science. Senior leaders have reviewed the school's curriculum. A consequence of this is that from September there is increased curriculum time for English and mathematics in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Further, from the start of next term, psychology AS and A Level will be on offer in the sixth form.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders have taken effective steps to improve the reliability of teachers' assessment of their students' attainment and progress. Enlisting the support of professionals from a number of other schools including the national support school, they have checked teachers' evaluation of students' work. Consequently, senior leaders have much more confidence in the data they are collecting about students' performance at Key Stage 4. These data are used to inform the half-termly Key Stage 4 progress alert meetings. These meetings are used to highlight those students whose progress is giving cause for concern and identify the extra help they will receive to move their learning forward.

Senior leaders are continuing to address weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Teachers are regularly observed at work and a range of evidence is used to determine the standard of classroom practice across the school. This evidence includes formal lesson observations, shorter visits to lessons, an examination of the work in students' books and an analysis of students' progress data. As a result of this monitoring, all teachers now have teaching and learning plans which identify each teacher's strengths and areas for development. The latter informs the training they will need to access to improve their professional performance. The school's monitoring records indicate that the standard of teaching across the school continues to improve but there are some pockets of weaker practice, which senior leaders are continuing to address.

Senior leaders have introduced much greater rigour to teachers' performance management. They have invested in a computer-based package that allows teachers to evaluate their practice against the Teachers' Standards and, with their line manager, agree targets for the measurable impact of their work and the training they will need to achieve them. Accordingly, lines of accountability are well defined, teachers are clear about their responsibilities and how their success will be measured. The outcomes of performance management are also used to inform decisions about teachers' pay.

Students' attendance is carefully monitored by an assistant headteacher and year leaders. The parents of students who fail to register in the morning receive a text message to alert them that their son is not in school. Students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and at risk of not attending are sensitively monitored and they and their parents directed to appropriate help and support. As a result, students' attendance remains consistently above national averages and the proportions of students who are persistently absent from school, well below average.

The standards committee of the governing body meet regularly to monitor the progress being made against each of the improvement priorities in the school development plan. This enables them to hold senior leaders to account for the impact of the work being done to improve the school and help maintain the pace of change. The governing body have been instrumental in brokering the services of the

national leader of education and his colleagues from the national support school to boost leadership capacity at Audenshaw.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The school asserts that improvements in the quality of teaching are leading to improved outcomes for students. The school's data for the current Year 11 students indicate an increase of 16 percentage points in the proportion of students leaving the school with five higher grade GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics, when compared to 2014. Further, the school's data indicate that the proportion of students making the progress expected of them in English and mathematics has increased by 20 percentage points and 17 percentage points respectively, when compared to last year. All three measures of students' performance are well above 2014 national averages.
- Senior leaders have taken a realistic approach to improving outcomes at GCSE level in 2015. They have adopted a rigorous approach to target setting, with students given GCSE subject predictions based on prior attainment. Students are then regularly assessed and their progress closely monitored. These approaches coupled with a variety of additional help for students, including Saturday morning school, the on-line resource 'GCSEPod' and mentoring have focused students and boosted their preparation for end of Key Stage 4 examinations. As one student is quoted in the summer term parents' newsletter, 'The Saturday school sessions, 'It's like an extra day at school. Best for revision just before the exams to catch up on anything you don't know.'
- Senior leaders are targeting the extra funding they receive from the pupil premium, effectively, to provide bespoke support packages for students known to be eligible for free school meals who are underachieving at Key Stage 4. The school's achievement data indicate that, as a result, attainment gaps are closing.
- Senior leaders took the decision to cancel study leave, prior to the public examinations for students in Year 11, 12 and 13. Their intention being to maximise students learning time and as a consequence, increase their chances of achieving their targets at GCSE, AS and A level.
- Weekly training sessions for teachers, linked to key aspects of professional practice for example, improving students' engagement in their learning and behaviour management is having a positive impact on students' attitudes. The school reports that the number of recorded incidents of students disturbing the learning of others is falling.
- Middle leaders have a much greater role in monitoring the work of their departments and promoting high-quality teaching and learning than was the

case in the past. They have all received training in order to make reliable judgements on the quality of their colleagues' classroom practice and enable them to design professional development activities for those teachers whose professional standards fall below senior leaders' expectations. Alongside the support provided by the school's lead practitioners, these approaches are leading to an improving trend in the quality of teaching across the school.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Although teachers' management of classroom behaviour is improving and incidents of disruption to learning are in decline, inconsistencies in some teachers' application of the school's behaviour policy remain. Consequently, learning time in some lessons is not maximized.
- The monitoring of students' attainment and progress at Key Stage 3 is not as rigorous as it is at Key Stage 4. Although data on students' attainment and progress is collected and analysed, this analysis does not trigger the degree of extra help for students who are falling behind, in the same way that it does for students in Years' 10 and 11. As a result, opportunities to accelerate underperforming students' progress, in Key Stage 3, by filling gaps in their knowledge and understanding are being missed.
- Teachers' regularly mark students' work. In the best examples, students are given clear advice by their teachers on what they need to do to improve their work, which they then act on. When marking is of this quality, it has a positive impact on learning. However, not all marking is of this standard, with some teachers making insufficient demands on students to improve their work and, as a consequence, limiting their progress.
- Opportunities for governors to hold exit interviews with staff leaving their posts, in order to inform their evaluation of how well the school is doing are being missed.

External support

The school has formed effective links with Altrincham Boys' Grammar School, a national support school. The headteacher of the latter school, who is a national leader of education, is working with senior leaders, providing them with help, support and advice in their drive to improve the school. Subject specialists from the national support school have worked with middle leaders to assure the accuracy of students' attainment and progress data. As a result, senior leaders and governors say they are confident in the reliability of this information and are using it, increasingly, to make decisions about where resources should be directed to improve students' outcomes and to hold teachers to account.

Specialist staff from a neighbouring school have provided practical help to senior leaders to improve provision in science.

Staff benefit from Audenshaw's membership of a national network of schools. This has provided them with a source of high quality materials and training opportunities aimed at improving students' outcomes at GCSE and A Level.