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Mrs Carolyn Barker  
Headteacher  
Hope Wood Academy  
Crawlaw Road  
Easington Colliery  
Peterlee  
County Durham  
SR8 3LP

Dear Mrs Barker

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Hope Wood Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 4–5 November 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 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may 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 Ascent Multi Academy Trust, the Corporate Director: Children's and Adults' Services for Durham and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Urgently improve the safeguarding of students by:
  - ensuring that all members of staff and governors are regularly trained in safeguarding and child protection
  - making sure that all required safe recruitment checks are carried out and recorded on the single central record
  - completing detailed records about all serious incidents, including where restraint is used, as quickly as possible afterwards
  - routinely reviewing information about serious incidents by senior leaders and governors to ensure areas for improvement in the academy's provision are identified and put in place as quickly as possible
  - ensuring that the academy's safeguarding policy is consistently implemented and rigorously monitored.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching, including for post-16 students, so that it is at least consistently good and enables all pupils in all subjects to be challenged in their learning and reach their full potential by:
  - eradicating inadequate teaching
  - ensuring accurate assessment of pupils' attainments and progress, including rigorous moderation of teachers' assessments with other schools is carried out regularly
  - raising expectations and ensuring that teachers take full account of what each pupil already knows and can do so that activities challenge them
  - improving the use of assessment and knowledge of how to challenge and increase the progress of the most-able pupils and those with the most profound learning difficulties
  - providing high-quality professional development and training for staff focused on eliminating gaps in subject knowledge, particularly in the teaching of reading, writing and numeracy
  - ensuring that staff understand and implement the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage
  - improving the academy's approach to the teaching of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) so that pupils learn new sounds quickly and are given books that allow them to put into practice what they have learned
  - ensuring there is a rigorous and effective approach to teaching literacy and numeracy in all areas of the curriculum.
  
- Improve pupils' behaviour, including their attendance, by:
  - ensuring an up-to-date behaviour policy, with clear sanctions and rewards, is understood by pupils, parents and staff, and is consistently implemented

- ensuring that behaviour incidents are rigorously logged and efforts to bring about improvements are evaluated
  - reporting attendance patterns and information about sanctions, rewards and incidents routinely to governors
  - increasing attendance through setting ambitious targets, and working closely with the pupils, their parents, and other agencies, to achieve these.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
- rigorously monitoring important aspects of the academy's work, in particular pupils' progress and their behaviour, and the quality of teaching so that leaders and managers have a thorough understanding of how well each pupil is learning
  - ensuring this information is drawn together to provide an accurate self-evaluation of how well the academy is performing and a well-matched improvement plan
  - making sure all of the pupil premium and primary school sports funding are used effectively
  - improving communication of academy leaders and managers, including governors, with other staff, so that the policies and developments are implemented consistently and so that morale is improved
  - ensuring performance management is rigorous and that targets set for teachers are specific and effective to help improve pupils' progress
  - ensuring that expectations and responsibilities for leaders at all levels are clear and detailed within their job role information.
- Improve governance by improving communication with parents so that they understand who the governors are and their roles and responsibilities, and are fully involved in and kept up to date with academy developments.

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

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 4–5 November 2015**

### **Evidence**

Regular meetings were held between the lead inspector and senior staff to discuss aspects of leadership and management, and any emerging issues from the inspection. Further discussions took place with the staff responsible for safeguarding and post-16 provision, and three senior officers from the Ascent Multi Academy Trust. A range of documents, provided by senior staff, were read and evaluated. These included the academy's single central record of the safeguarding checks for all adults who work with the children, the latest version of the joint academy development plan/proprietor's statement of action, records of incidents of poor behaviour and restraint, records of referrals to children's services/social care and the designated academy person for safeguarding, and reports/notes of visits from Ascent officers and other external consultants. During the inspection, senior staff joined the lead inspector in visiting every class in the academy. Seven part-lessons were observed separately by the lead inspector. Each observation included a detailed review of pupils' and students' workbooks, particularly in English and mathematics, along with a review of the 'learning journals' used in the early years, and other records of pupils' learning in the primary phase.

### **Context**

There has been considerable change in the academy since the previous inspection visit. From the 1 November, the academy, formally known as Glendene Arts Academy, became part of the Ascent Multi Academy Trust and changed its name to Hope Wood Academy. New appointments of the former interim headteacher to substantive headteacher, a new director of teaching and learning and a deputy headteacher have been made. There is also a new middle leadership structure in place with some new appointees, which will be fully completed by January 2016. A new site manager has also been appointed.

One assistant headteacher is absent due to extended health problems. There have been six resignations from teachers and two from teaching assistants. Two members of the business support team have left the academy. Four new teachers have been appointed, one of whom started in September; the other three start in January 2016. There are still two primary posts vacant, although two instructors have been appointed and are working towards qualified teacher status. Four teachers are absent, three because of extended ill health. Four teaching assistants are also absent, two of whom are on maternity leave.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

For the first time since the previous inspection, there is now clear evidence of progress in pupils' and students' achievement, especially in their acquisition of key literacy and numeracy skills. Senior leaders acknowledge that this progress is still not

consistently seen across the whole academy, or in all subject areas. However, through targeted interventions and support programmes, more teachers are providing better quality learning experiences for the pupils and students, which are helping them to make better progress.

### **The quality of teaching**

The academy continues to make progress in this area because of the ongoing challenge by senior leaders to eradicate any weak or inadequate teaching that is adversely affecting the progress of pupils and students. There are some good examples of teachers recording pupils' progress in literacy, especially in the primary phase. The careful use of commercial schemes is giving teachers a greater confidence to record, more accurately and regularly, the progress that the pupils are making in acquiring and using essential literacy skills. At its best, teachers show a skilful use of observing the pupils and recording what they have learnt. This is providing helpful feedback to the pupils, in addition to helping teachers assess the pupils' rate of progress more accurately. However, this quality is not seen consistently in other areas of the curriculum, either at primary or secondary levels. In some of the pupils' and students' workbooks, teachers are describing what has been done rather than what has been learnt. This also applies to the 'learning journals' used in the early years, where currently there are too few opportunities for the parents/carers to contribute to these journals.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The academy continues to make progress in relation to improving the safeguarding of all its pupils and students.

Senior leaders know there is still a small number of pupils and students who present very challenging behaviour, which affects their own and others' learning and continues to take up the valuable time of teachers and support staff in dealing with these outbursts. For example, during this visit one pupil who exhibited a very disrespectful tone and manner towards the staff was observed leaving the lesson without any immediate follow-up or direct staff supervision. Generally, however, pupils and students behave sensibly and arrive for the start of lessons promptly. Since the previous monitoring visit, supervision out of lessons has been revised and there are now more staff directly observing the pupils and students in and around the academy at breaks- and lunchtimes.

Procedures for the children arriving at the academy and leaving at the end of the day have been significantly changed. There is now a clear system for taxis and coaches to enter the academy site to drop off the pupils and students, and this is tightly supervised by the site manager and accompanying staff. Similarly robust procedures operate at the end of academy day with all taxis and coaches carefully

supervised, to the extent that all engines are shut down when waiting to collect pupils and students.

### **The quality of leadership and management of the academy**

The overall effectiveness of leadership and management is continuing to improve at a rapid pace. Senior leaders are driving change across the academy, not least in challenging weak or inadequate teaching to improve quickly. The completion of senior and middle leader appointments has given a greater strength and depth to the quality of leadership across the academy, in addition to bringing a greater capacity to help it make the necessary improvements.

The academy's joint development plan/proprietor's statement of action provides a clear focus on the key areas for ongoing improvements. There is now a good balance of priorities and actions, which address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection report, alongside other areas, which have been identified by senior leaders as needing to improve. The specific identification of links with parents/carers and members of the Ascent Multi Academy Trust Board are giving a more coherent and holistic overview of what the academy needs to do in order to move out of special measures.

New governing body developments are also taking place. The most significant of these has been the introduction of a 'monitoring, challenge and support' group, which is chaired by the new interim Chief Executive from the Ascent Multi Academy Trust, alongside the link governor, external consultant and a peer headteacher. The first meeting of this group took place on the first day of this inspection visit, but plans are well advanced for it to meet each half term to overview the progress of the academy.

The headteacher's self-evaluation of the academy's current provision is accurate. It recognises that there are still areas of inadequacy, which need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. However, it is also realistic enough to show where there are early signs of improvements being made across each of the inspection areas, not least in leadership and management and improved outcomes for all pupils and students.

The quality of the curricular provision continues to improve. For example, in the early years there is now a good range of activities for the children to experience both indoor and outdoor activities, within the bounds of teacher-led and child-initiated learning activities. The emphasis on the curricular development of key literacy and numeracy skills is also beginning to make a difference to the progress that the pupils and students make during their time in the academy. The full effect of this is more evident at primary rather than secondary level. The current curricular provision for 16 to 19 study programmes is underdeveloped, but a recent review by an external consultant has provided accurate feedback on where the academy needs to improve its provision.

## **External support**

The external support provided by officers from the Ascent Multi Academy Trust and external consultants is helping the academy to make progress in key areas. The quality of this work now ensures that senior leaders, including members of the Trust Board, have a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy, and the urgent actions that need to be taken in order to help it make the necessary progress.