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Mr Colin Boxall
Principal
Grace Academy Coventry
Wigston Road
Coventry
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Dear Mr Boxall

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grace Academy Coventry

Following my visit with Rob Hackfath, Her Majesty's Inspector and Jacqueline Newsome, Ofsted Inspector to your academy on 3–4 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 fifth monitoring inspection 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The academy may appoint two newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. They may be appointed to departments throughout the academy but not in computing.

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 fifth monitoring inspection on 3–4 November 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, inspectors observed pupils' learning in 26 lessons in a range of subjects across the academy including in the sixth form. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils about behaviour, attendance and how they learn how to keep themselves safe. The behaviour of pupils 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, members 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 45 responses to the academy's own questionnaire to parents completed since the previous monitoring inspection visit. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the academy's analysis of pupils' current attainment and progress. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including information about pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality, and the academy's procedures to ensure pupils are kept safe and secure.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2015 the restructuring of the academy leadership team has been completed. A new head of mathematics and two special educational needs coordinators have been appointed. Staffing instability has largely been resolved. The academy has increased the number of music and drama teachers to support the delivery of extracurricular music and drama. Difficulties in recruiting teachers of science remain. A supply science teacher covering maternity leave left the academy in October 2015.

Outcomes for pupils

The academy's unvalidated 2015 outcomes for the end of Key Stage 4, while an improvement on 2014, are below those predicted by academy leaders at the previous monitoring inspection visit in June 2015. The provisional results show that the academy meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 4. The proportion of pupils making the progress they should in English has improved slightly on the 2014 figure. This is above the 2014 national average. However, not enough pupils made the progress, or more than the progress, expected of them in mathematics. The proportion of pupils doing well in mathematics has risen since 2014. Information provided by the academy shows that the proportion of pupils making more than the progress expected in mathematics has also risen since 2014. However, both of these figures are below the 2014 national averages. The

proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has improved by 7% on the 2014 figure. This is below the 2014 national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils doing well in English and mathematics has increased since 2014. Information provided by the academy shows that the gap between disadvantaged and other pupils has reduced from two thirds of a grade to a third of a grade in English and from one grade to three quarters of a grade in mathematics.

The 2015 results in other subjects are varied. Academy leaders are aware of this and have taken prompt actions to tackle the teaching and leadership issues that resulted in unacceptable outcomes. It is too early to see the impact of these actions in terms of pupils' outcomes.

Information provided by the academy indicates that a greater number of pupils in all year groups and across a range of subjects are making the progress, and more than the progress, expected of them. Academy leaders are aware that these results must be stringently moderated in order to ensure their validity.

The number of pupils leaving the academy at the end of Year 11 in 2015 not in education, employment or training looks set to decrease. The academy is awaiting final details and information from the local authority about pupils' destinations to confirm these outcomes.

In the sixth form, an increasing number of pupils are staying at the academy to complete their studies. Pupils on most vocational courses achieved outcomes above national figures. Information provided by the academy shows that this trend is being maintained. However, while improving, outcomes for pupils on academic courses are below national averages. Only a very small minority of pupils achieve an A* to C grade when retaking the GCSE examination in mathematics. Academy leaders are confident that this is set to improve in the November 2015 retake examinations. All of the pupils leaving the academy at the end of Year 13 in 2015 secured employment and training or a place at a higher education institution.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching has improved since the inspection in January 2014. As a consequence, more pupils are doing well, particularly in mathematics. There is greater consistency in pupils' learning as a result of the reduced number of changes to the staff team. However, this is not yet the case in computing and science. Academy leaders are aware of these issues and have put in place appropriate actions to help pupils catch up with their work and to ensure they make the progress expected of them. It is too early to see the impact of these measures in terms of pupils' learning.

Where learning is particularly effective, teachers use their good subject knowledge and accurate assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding to plan activities that are well matched to their abilities and engage their interest and attention. In these lessons, books are frequently marked and pupils' learning is supported and developed by helpful and constructive comments from the teacher. Pupils respond enthusiastically where the work challenges, interests and extends them.

Where learning is limited, teachers have not considered carefully enough what pupils, particularly the most able, need to be able to do and know. As a result, learning activities are not always matched appropriately to pupils' ability levels and they find the work too easy or too hard. In these situations, pupils lose interest in the work and become bored and distracted. In addition, a minority of teachers do not provide pupils with feedback that helps them develop their knowledge and understanding. A small minority of pupils are overly reliant on their teacher to guide their learning. They do not have the necessary learning skills, such as resilience, perseverance or self-awareness, to be able to take control of their learning. As a result, they become distracted when they are unsure about what to do. A very small minority of teachers fail to recognise when they have lost the attention of pupils, particularly during silent reading sessions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' conduct in lessons and around the academy has improved since the inspection in January 2014. Relationships among pupils and between staff and pupils are generally positive. The number of fixed-term exclusions and incidents of poor behaviour have reduced and the number of rewards and awards received by pupils have increased. The majority of staff consistently apply the academy's behaviour policy and challenge pupils who fail to meet the academy's expectations in terms of conduct, uniform, punctuality and the quality and quantity of their work. However, where teaching fails to engage pupils' interest, a minority lose focus, become distracted and disturb the learning of others.

Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with national figures. However, the number of pupils who are persistently absent, missing 15% of lessons, remains stubbornly high and is above national figures. Academy leaders have begun to take actions to tackle this, for example by recommending the issue of fixed-penalty fines. It is too early to see the impact of these actions.

As a result of the ineffective leadership of special educational needs and disabilities in the past, the academy has not completed some of the statutory annual reviews of pupils' statement of special educational needs. In addition, the routine monitoring and analysis of special educational needs provision has not been completed. The two new special educational needs coordinators have acted quickly and decisively to ensure statutory requirements are met and that provision is monitored. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work in terms of pupils' outcomes.

When asked, the majority of pupils say they feel safe in the academy and know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including resisting the attempts of others to persuade them to act in a way that is unlawful, antisocial or extremist. This indicates that the many and varied activities delivered through the academy's 'ethos and values' programme are having a positive impact in helping pupils keep themselves safe. All of the parents of Year 7 pupils who completed the academy's questionnaire this term agree that their children feel safe at the academy.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the inspection in January 2014, the academy has undergone considerable change. After a slow start, this has been effectively managed by the Grace Foundation, the Principal, the leadership team and the AIB. Leaders have used the appraisal process to appropriately challenge teaching and leadership underperformance. As a consequence, a large number of staff have left the academy or relinquished their positions of responsibility. The staff team is now more stable. As a result, the majority of approaches to learning, teaching and behaviour management are more consistent and an increasing number of pupils are doing well, particularly in mathematics.

However, inconsistencies remain. The academy's self-evaluation is too descriptive. As a result, the academy's action plans do not prioritise the actions needed to bring about further rapid improvements in learning, teaching and pupils' outcomes. A number of academy policies, for example the assessment and feedback policy, are not consistently applied. As a consequence, not all pupils have access to specific and constructive feedback that enables them to improve their work. The academy's pupil premium grant and Year 7 catch-up reports are not evaluative. As a result, academy leaders and the AIB are unable to accurately identify which strategies are the most effective in supporting pupils who are disadvantaged and those Year 7 pupils needing to achieve the levels expected for their age.

The academy website does not allow parents to have easy access to updated information and policies, and the delay in getting a third party to update the website causes frustration for academy leaders. While safeguarding practices are thorough, well targeted and ensure pupils are safe, procedures are not always detailed in academy policies. For example, the academy's safeguarding and child protection policies do not describe how Grace Academy Coventry pupils are kept safe from child sex exploitation or drug abuse. In addition, the policy does not specify the academy's approach in dealing with pupils who are missing from education.

The restructuring of the leadership group has brought about some improvements in learning, teaching and pupils' outcomes. However, some of the leaders are so new to post that the significant and sustained impact of their actions cannot yet be gauged. For example, the two new special educational needs coordinators have

acted swiftly to ensure pupils with a statement of special educational needs have their annual reviews but the impact in terms of provision and pupils' progress cannot be measured.

The AIB provides effective support and challenge in equal measure. Members of the AIB have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The AIB and Grace Foundation support leaders in tackling the underperformance of staff and in appointing new teachers and leaders. Essential policies are reviewed and the safeguarding checks on staff meet requirements. The AIB is aware of the inconsistencies in the application of some policies and has begun to take remedial action. The AIB and academy leaders ensure that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain through the 'ethos and values' programme, assemblies and an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum.

External support

The academy continues to draw effectively on a range of support from the local authority and other agencies. The academy has collaborated with Foxford School and Community Arts College, Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College and Lyng Hall School to establish the 'Early intervention for school aged children' group that works with a range of agencies such as health and the police to support vulnerable pupils and their families.

As academy leaders become more effective, they have become less reliant on external support. However, the sponsor, through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), continues to monitor the academy's progress and commissions appropriate support when necessary.