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Vicki Redhead
Principal
Bishop Creighton Academy
Vineyard Road
Peterborough
PE1 5DB

Dear Mrs Redhead

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bishop Creighton Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 3–4 November 2015 with Olive Millington, Ofsted Inspector, 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 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive of Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust and the Director of Children's Services for Peterborough.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Eliminate inadequate teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2, and increase the proportion that is good or outstanding, so that pupils make faster progress by:
 - improving pupils' knowledge and skills in spelling, punctuation, grammar and number work
 - improving the early reading (phonics) skills of pupils in Key Stage 1, and plugging the gaps in the phonic knowledge of older pupils
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use and improve their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - making sure that pupils improve their work by acting on the guidance teachers provide when they mark their work
 - making sure that pupils are ready to learn and concentrate well throughout lessons.

- Improve leadership and management and increase the capacity of leaders to secure necessary improvement by:
 - increasing the number of staff available to share leadership tasks, including the leading of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - building on the work already started to hold teachers to account for the progress made by their pupils
 - making sure that leaders and governors are trained to analyse the data collected about pupils' attainment and progress to eliminate the underachievement of all groups, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those supported by pupil premium funding.

An external review of governance, to include an evaluation of the school's use of pupil premium funding, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 3–4 November 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with you, the deputy principal, the executive principal and safeguarding officer for Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust. We discussed the progress of the academy with parents and carers at the start of the school day and with pupils in classes and in the playground. Inspectors met with the academy council and with teaching staff following observation of lessons. We reviewed data on pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation, curriculum plans and other documentation including the academy's self-evaluation.

Context

Since the last visit, three new members of teaching staff have joined the academy, including two on employment-based teacher training schemes.

Outcomes for pupils

Although standards remain low in relation to schools nationally, some key aspects of pupils' achievement have continued to improve. Children are making a better start, shown by the higher proportion of children in Reception Year now reaching the level of development expected before joining Year 1. A higher proportion of pupils are learning to read more quickly, shown by their understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) and more regular reading habits. The proportion of pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 having reached the level expected in reading, writing and mathematics has continued to improve. However, despite these improvements, the academy did not reach floor standards (the minimum requirement set by the government). As a consequence, some pupils left for secondary school in the summer with considerable catching up to do. The standards reached by pupils currently in Year 6 are higher, showing continued progress from Year 5.

Inconsistent progress as pupils move through the academy or move schools still holds back too many pupils. For example, the 2015 end-of-Year 2 test results in reading, writing and mathematics show that pupils who had benefited from the school since Reception Year attained higher standards than those who joined later, in Year 1 or 2. Although disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are catching up with their peers, the disadvantaged pupils still lag behind. Higher attendance is contributing to some improvements in pupils' achievement. However, the proportion of unauthorised absences remains above average. The academy's new curriculum, in addition to the breadth of extra-curricular activities provided, is helping to promote pupils' enjoyment in learning and extend the range of achievements. These include sporting and artistic skills that give all pupils an equal opportunity to succeed. This includes those whose learning of English as an additional language limits their understanding in some subjects. Improvements in pupils' handwriting, linked to mark-making drawing exercises in all classes, show

what is possible at the academy when the wider curriculum is used effectively to improve pupils' basic skills.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is inconsistent. However, the academy's new teaching and learning policy is helping to establish more common approaches. For example, the use of 'steps to success' to give pupils clear guidance about what is expected and how to progress is the norm. Similarly, the academy's marking policy is used in all classes to provide guidance to pupils about how they could improve their work or build on success. Shared methods of managing pupils' behaviour provide coherence for pupils about rules to follow and rewards to achieve. Nevertheless, there is currently wide variation in the success with which teaching and learning policies are applied. Where staff use the guidance they are given well, this is reflected in higher levels of pupil engagement. For example, the Year 4 pupils enthusiastically asked staff and other pupils different types of question in different subjects because the teacher had devised a 'bingo card' of prompts to help them learn how to ask questions. In contrast, where staff provide too many answers too quickly themselves, pupils' levels of involvement and understanding remain superficial.

The teaching that engages pupils actively, evident in a Year 3 and a Year 6 class, creates an effective balance between the teachers' and pupils' input. In these classes, thorough planning ensures that pupils' learning is carefully structured, drawing on previous lessons and teachers' knowledge of individual pupils. However, where pupils are not thoroughly prepared or are left for too long to work things out for themselves, this limits their progress. This was evident in the Reception children's learning more successfully indoors than outdoors. Learning in Year 2 improved when a teaching assistant used timely intervention to keep her group of pupils' writing on track following a visit into the city centre. Good ideas are emerging, such as the links made between homework and classwork by a Year 1 teacher which complemented the 'challenge' activities reported at the last monitoring visit. These initiatives are helping to engage parents and carers in their child's learning at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning, particularly where the teaching is stimulating and challenging. They enjoy their contribution to group and paired work, such as topic work in Year 5 that engaged groups of pupils in deciding which key events in history took place in which decade and reasoning why. Pupils' approaches to individual work are more variable, limited for some pupils by their lack of understanding, communication or the skills to work unaided. Pupils at the academy respond well to competitive approaches to learning. This was evident in assembly where dividing pupils into groups raised their participation in singing. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher used the 'weekly learning skill' to challenge the girls to make a more active contribution to discussion. Assessing pupils' learning skills is helping to focus staff and pupils on refining particular aspects of pupils' personal development. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this work on academic achievement.

Parents and carers are confident that the academy is a caring and considerate place to learn in which relationships between pupils and with adults are supportive. This is reflected in the academy's safeguarding policies and procedures, which meet requirements. The academy's forthcoming focus on anti-bullying is timely given that, while pupils feel that bullying is rare, occasions do arise when they feel lonely in the playground. Pupils played cooperatively during the inspection, which behaviour records show is the norm. However, although the range of leadership responsibilities available to pupils has increased, these do not extend to roles such as play leaders. Their improving teamwork in sports and physical education provides a good basis.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The Principal and deputy principal are working hard to accelerate improvement. This includes temporary responsibility for mathematics and literacy. However, middle leadership remains a weakness and contributes to the inconsistent quality of subject teaching. Improvements in subjects such as science reported on previous monitoring visits have not been sustained. The monitoring, evaluation and training underpinning improvements are not being used in a wide enough range of subjects to promote sustained progress for pupils between subjects. The new curriculum introduced by senior leaders has provided an opportunity to revitalise subject leadership and teaching, although this work is at an early stage. However, the school's strong programme of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities provides a secure foundation. The consistency with which staff are reinforcing 'learning skills' through the new curriculum is a positive start.

Senior leaders provide clear guidance to staff, pupils, parents and carers about the academy's work. Regular newsletters for parents and carers, the academy council for pupils and the informative handbook for staff are examples of communications that clarify how they can support the academy's improvements. Parents and carers who made sure that their children supported the summer school spoke well of this initiative. Other recent developments are starting to have a positive impact. For example, the executive principal is helping to use the wider perspective and resources of the 30 schools in the trust to challenge and support the academy. This is evident in the joint training provided for staff new to teaching, the availability of consultants in early years, reading, writing and mathematics, and school-to-school reviews involving the Principal. Support specific to the academy includes work to ensure that targets are challenging and improvement planning is on track. Analysis of pupils' progress in basic skills is regular and robust. However, the recently developed academy council of governance has not yet met and is incomplete with regard to representation from parents, carers and the community.

External support

Since the academy joined Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust, academy leaders have found it unnecessary to draw on external support.