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22 December 2015

Matthew Flannigan  
Executive Principal  
Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy  
Eliot Street  
Nechells  
Birmingham  
B7 5LB

Dear Mr Flannigan

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy**

Following my visit with John Bates, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 2–3 December 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers. This is subject to prior consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector.

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 Birmingham

Yours sincerely

Stuart Bellworthy

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better, by making sure that all teachers:
  - take account of what pupils already know, understand and can do when planning activities, especially for more-able pupils and those who are disabled and have special educational needs
  - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the quality of work that pupils produce
  - provide pupils with the precise guidance that they need to improve their work.
  
- Raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by making sure that pupils:
  - spell correctly, use grammar and punctuation appropriately and write legibly
  - have the opportunity to solve more difficult mathematical problems
  - have regular chances to use and extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills and knowledge in different subjects.
  
- Ensure that all leaders and managers:
  - have the skills needed to check carefully the quality of teaching and pupils' learning
  - have the expertise required to help teachers improve their teaching
  - use information about pupils' achievement to check carefully how well different groups of pupils are learning
  - take prompt action once weaknesses are identified in teaching and pupils' learning
  - make sure that pupil premium funding is helping pupils who are eligible for this additional support to make good progress and reach higher standards in all year groups.
  
- Make sure that governors develop their skills so that they can ensure that leaders and managers help pupils make good and better progress.

An external review of governance and the academy's use of 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 2–3 December 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents, and met with you, the Chief Executive Officer of the sponsor, E-ACT, senior leaders, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from E-ACT. Inspectors observed teaching, scrutinised a range of documents, including action plans, information about the progress made by pupils, records of the work of the governing body, attendance and exclusion records and records showing how the academy cares for its pupils and keeps them safe.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, three new teachers have been appointed. These include an early years leader and a literacy leader. A new special educational needs and disabilities leader has been internally appointed. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed. The sponsor, E-ACT, has an additional systems leader for safeguarding, special educational needs and disabilities working with the academy.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The academy's own assessment information, collected earlier this term, demonstrates that from their starting points most pupils are making expected progress. Some pupils, particularly some of those in Year 6, are making more than expected progress. However, as most pupils' starting points across the academy are below average, the progress they need to make to catch up is considerable. The provision for the most-able pupils and those who have special educational needs or disabilities is improving, as teachers are taking better account of what pupils already know, understand and can do. The leadership of special educational needs and disabilities is stronger and all pupils in this group now have learning plans to support their progress.

Inspection observations and the academy's own records show that teaching is starting to improve, especially where staffing has been most stable. Where teaching is stronger, staff set high expectations of all pupils, manage behaviour effectively and create a good climate for learning.

The latest published assessment information does not show an improving trend across the academy, as standards in all year groups are still below the national average. The academy still does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics. While pupils' achievement at the end of Year 2 improved in reading and mathematics, it declined in writing. In 2015, standards at the end of

Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 all declined. Disadvantaged pupils achieve better than other pupils in the academy and their peers nationally. However, disadvantaged pupils in the academy achieve below non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Higher quality, more consistent teaching has led to improved pupil progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Where teaching is weaker, expectations are not high enough and a few pupils are allowed to go off-task. Leaders have further developed systems for assessing progress and now have a more accurate picture of how well pupils are progressing across the academy. Although teaching is typically improving, progress still varies in some year groups. Some pupils have made good progress, while others are not making enough progress to catch up. Pupils are still making the most progress in Year 6. While the academy has some measures in place to accelerate progress in other year groups and provide earlier intervention for pupils who are falling behind, it is too early to measure the full impact of these measures.

Initial staffing instability in some year groups in September has had a detrimental effect on pupils' progress. Where pupils have had temporary teachers, the progress pupils make varies considerably. When permanent teachers have taught them, the pupils make better progress. The progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics has now evened out. The academy's own assessment information has been checked and agreed with other schools. Disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding make better progress than that of their classmates. Pupil premium funding is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and those in local authority care. The use of this funding is carefully monitored for the impact that it has. Consequently, leaders and governors are clear about the success of strategies to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are now making better progress. This is as a result of improved planning and provision for these pupils.

The progress of the children currently in the early years has improved, as a result of better teaching, provision and leadership. Parents are pleased with their children's start at school and have noticed the extra funding spent in the early years classrooms and outside learning areas. This provision is now a colourful, secure and exciting place for young children to learn and develop early skills such as phonics (the sounds that letters make). The adults in Nursery and Reception work together well and have consistently high expectations of the children's speaking and listening skills, for example.

All teachers have worked closely with a link teacher from another E-ACT academy to support improvements in the quality of teaching. As a result of successes, the link teachers are now able to target their support to where it is needed most. E-ACT systems leaders managing this initiative have produced reports to demonstrate the impact of this support. Inspectors found that nearly all pupils' workbooks are marked

and more pupils are regularly responding to teachers' feedback. However, leaders are aware that more work is needed to ensure all teachers are applying the academy's marking and feedback policy consistently.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils' attendance has improved and is now similar to the national average for primary schools. Persistent absence has halved since this time last year. This is a result of improved monitoring by leaders and of pupils' better attitude to learning. Pupils are polite, work well together and enjoy coming to school. They are respectful to the adults who work with them, and, at times, show great enthusiasm to improve their skills. New playground equipment and activities at lunchtimes have improved pupils' teamwork and enjoyment of school. The behaviour system has been updated to reward those who always try hard and pupils are very keen to earn 'stars', which count towards their rewards. The system is clear and pupils know when their behaviour needs to improve. Teachers are using the behaviour system effectively. The pastoral leader is able to demonstrate a positive impact both on whole classes and on a few individuals who have had behaviour difficulties in the past. In lessons, pupils' conduct and concentration is better when the learning and behaviour expectations are higher. However, on occasions when teaching is less engaging and pupils' learning needs are not met, a few pupils lose concentration, do less work, and, as a result, make less progress.

There have been marked improvements in the academy's safeguarding procedures, which have been given a higher priority. All staff have read the latest Department for Education guidance and have recently completed training regarding the prevention of radicalisation. Child protection records of how the academy keeps its most vulnerable pupils safe are now detailed and well organised. An E-ACT systems leader has effectively supported the process of improving the academy's safeguarding procedures.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Leadership is more consistent, which has led to accelerated improvements in some areas of the academy. You, the Executive Principal, have high expectations of staff, a demonstrable drive to see the academy improve and have responded quickly to recommendations. Leaders regularly monitor teaching and have an accurate evaluation of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. New staff appointments were made near the start of this school year to lead literacy, early years, special educational needs and disabilities. The early impact of the early years and special educational needs and disabilities leaders is evident, as a result of improved provision for these pupil groups and appropriate development plans. The literacy leader was not available to speak to inspectors, but the Associate Principal was able to explain some of the developments and support in this subject. There is a rigorous approach to evaluating the impact of the pupil premium funding and there is clarity about which areas provide the best value for money. As a result, pupils eligible for

the funding usually achieve above their peers. There is a new Chair of the Governing Body, who is also working closely with a group of parents to development pupil enrichment activities such as a science trip to the 'Think Tank'. The E-ACT board of trustees has recently approved a move towards a regionalised model of governance, although it is too early to measure the impact of this. Parents are very supportive of the recent developments in the academy, such as more consistent staffing, and improvements to early years. Parents' evening was recently held for the first time in a year and parents also enjoy the opportunity to see their children learning in the academy through 'Walk in Wednesdays'. Leaders are aware that while the academy is heading in the right direction, further work and development is required to fully embed improvements, so that they are consistent across the academy.

### **External support**

E-ACT has continued to prioritise improving this academy. Significant staff and financial resources have been used effectively to support the academy's development. E-ACT staff have been deployed to challenge and support leaders and teachers in areas such as safeguarding and special educational needs and disabilities. Consequently, these areas of the academy's work have improved. E-ACT representatives continue to hold the leaders to account for their work through regular meetings, which robustly monitor the improvements of the academy.