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Mrs Sally Cox  
Principal  
Wigston College  
Station Road  
Wigston  
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Dear Mrs Cox

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Wigston College**

Following my visit to your academy on 8 and 9 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2015.

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.**

The trust's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire, the Education Funding Agency

(EFA) and [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk). This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2015**

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11, so that it is at least good by ensuring that all teachers:
  - plan lessons with sufficient challenge for different groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs, and those who are disadvantaged
  - ensure that expectations for behaviour are clear, codes of conduct are used and activities engage students in their learning
  - assess work accurately and use this information effectively to plan the next steps that students need to take in their learning
  - insist on high standards of presentation, that students take sufficient care over their work and regularly do their best
  - ensure that students act upon the feedback they receive so they develop their skills and understanding.
  
- Raise achievement across the college, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
  - ensuring all teachers have the highest expectation for what different groups of students are able to achieve
  - developing a more consistent approach across all subjects to improving students' literacy and numeracy skills
  - improving the rate of completion and retention for sixth form courses
  - improving the identification of the individual needs of disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs in order to ensure they receive more effective support, including from teaching assistants.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - fewer students fall behind and require extra tuition in order to catch up
  - strategies for use of extra government funding to support disadvantaged students are effective in that these pupils are helped to make at least good progress
  - governors are more active in monitoring the school, in checking that agreed actions have the intended impact and providing effective challenge and support for school leaders
  - the arrangements made to educate some students off site for all, or part of the week, are checked regularly to ensure students are safe.
  
- Improve the management of behaviour and safety by ensuring that:
  - all staff regularly insist on high standards of behaviour, especially for those

who find it difficult to comply, by making effective use of the college's behaviour code in lessons and around the site

- lateness to lessons is consistently and effectively challenged
- strategies to improve attendance focus on those with low attendance and that codes for recording absence are used accurately
- students accessing alternative provision are attending regularly.

An external review of governance and of the college's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 December 2015**

### **Evidence**

I observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, senior and middle leaders, teaching and support staff, groups of pupils, governors including the Chair of the Local Governing Body, the campus headteacher, and directors from the trust, including the executive headteacher. I made short visits to 11 lessons to observe the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You accompanied me in visits to five of these lessons.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, the number of pupils on roll at the academy has reduced from 838 to 699. Ten teachers have left the academy. A new subject leader for mathematics has joined the academy. The trust has also appointed a campus headteacher to provide oversight of the academy's work and the work of the adjacent academy in the trust. Arrangements for the admission of pupils across the trust have been reorganised. As a result, from September 2016, the academy will no longer be admitting pupils at the start of Year 10 as it moves to providing sixth form provision only from September 2017.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Published performance information shows that the proportion of pupils attaining five good grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics, increased from 39% to 45% in the 2015 examinations. This improvement was seen largely because of pupils' much improved progress in English and mathematics. Whereas in 2014, the proportion of pupils making and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics was far too low, it improved this year to mirror the progress seen nationally. This is due to the very strong and appropriate focus that leaders and managers placed on raising achievement in English and mathematics following the section 5 inspection. Improvements were secured through the closer monitoring of teaching, together with support from teachers from other schools within the trust to help pupils tackle their weaknesses in English and mathematics. As a consequence, in 2015 the academy met the government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. This was not the case at the time of the previous section 5 inspection.

However, these figures masked the continued poor performance of disadvantaged pupils, whose attainment and progress remained too low, including in English and mathematics. Gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in

the academy, and nationally, widened. Hence, despite some improvements, attainment overall remained significantly below national figures across each of the English Baccalaureate subjects. Attainment was also low in science, having previously been in line with the national picture. Published performance information indicates that girls made good progress overall, as did some pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils. This information also shows that boys continued to make less progress and attain less well than girls.

Achievement in the sixth form was also too variable in the 2015 examinations. While there were some improvements seen in learners' attainment, too much variability was seen between subjects. The clear strengths seen in some subjects, for example English, modern foreign languages and computing, were not seen consistently in all subjects. In a few subjects, particularly AS Level geography, sociology and psychology, not enough learners who started the courses gained at least a pass mark.

These weaknesses remained because the short period between the Section 5 inspection which placed the academy in special measures and the public examinations was not sufficient to secure the improvements needed in raising attainment for all groups of pupils and sixth form learners and in all subjects.

The academy's current information regarding pupils' attainment and progress indicates a continuing trajectory of improvement in English and mathematics and improvements in other subjects, including science. It also shows that disadvantaged pupils are doing better than before. However, leaders and managers recognise that the assessment information on which this information is based is not equally robust enough in all subjects. Arrangements have now been put in place to strengthen the accuracy of teachers' predictions by ensuring they are rooted in analysis of the results from regular testing of pupils' understanding over time.

Retention rates in the sixth form are beginning to show signs of improvement. While too many learners left the academy at the end of Year 12 in 2015, currently almost all learners who joined the sixth form this year have remained on their courses. This is due to the improved leadership in the sixth form which has ensured that learners are placed on the right courses, the academy's raised expectations with regard to attendance and punctuality, and curriculum changes which are ensuring that learners make better use of independent study time and can access extra support when needed. All those who left the academy at the end of Year 12 have secured places to pursue further education or training elsewhere.

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

The quality of teaching is improving and senior leaders and managers judge that the around two thirds of teaching is now consistently good. In discussions, the pupils I met with from all year groups could identify clearly and confidently how teaching had improved. They reported significant improvements in the quality of marking and feedback. They spoke positively about the impact of the 'purple pen' marking which identifies the next steps pupils need to take to improve their work and requires them to take action accordingly. Pupils also said that they are now able to work more productively in most of their lessons because pupils' behaviour has improved.

Teachers are now much more aware of the need to meet the needs of different groups of pupils in their classes, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. They are now routinely required to identify which particular pupils they will direct most attention to and why. Good use of flightpaths are enabling teachers and their pupils to have a stronger understanding of how well pupils are progressing towards meeting their challenging targets. Leaders and managers know that judgements regarding the quality of teaching now need to be underpinned by the assessment information resulting from the regular testing which is now in place.

During the monitoring inspection, very effective learning was seen in English and mathematics. Some effective learning was also observed in science. In the most effective lessons visited, teachers were seen to make good use of assessment information to plan learning activities which were well matched to pupils' different needs. They also insisted on high standards of behaviour and presentation, and pupils responded well to these high expectations. In these lessons, the strong marking and feedback was seen in books, which included clear and specific points for improvement and the correction of pupils' spelling and grammatical errors. The teachers also targeted support where it was most needed, including that directed towards disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs.

In each of the mathematics lessons visited, teachers made good use of the red, amber and green cards which enable pupils to signal their varying levels of confidence in tackling the challenges set. This enabled the teachers to direct their support to the pupils in need of extra help. In a strong Year 10 lesson for higher attaining pupils, pupils' enthusiasm was palpable as they worked to solve equations using quadratics. Good use of more challenging tasks ensured that all were kept busy in purposeful learning and made good gains as a result. Similarly, in a lower set Year 10 mathematics lesson, all pupils engaged very well in a problem-solving activity devised by the teacher to help pupils prepare for their forthcoming practice examinations. In science, good use of a recent test was seen to help pupils identify

gaps in their knowledge and understanding and set precise and appropriate personal targets. Similarly, in the English lessons visited, across a range of ability sets, teachers made very effective use of examination criteria to help pupils understand how to attain well in their English written paper.

However, leaders and managers know that teaching across the curriculum needs to improve more quickly to ensure that all groups of pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, make good progress in all subjects. While the pupils I met with could identify the improvements made, they also reported that in a small minority of lessons they learn less well because the teachers do not ensure that the whole class works hard enough throughout the lesson.

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

Pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality have all improved significantly since the section 5 inspection. Leaders and managers have raised expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves and most pupils have responded well to the changes made. Behaviour management systems have been reviewed and simplified and are proving to be effective in improving behaviour in lessons and around the academy site. Pupils and staff, including support staff, spoke positively about the new C1, C2 and C3 behaviour system and could explain the difference it is making to improved behaviour in lessons. They also said, however, that a small – but decreasing – minority of pupils still do not behave well enough in a few of their lessons. Evidence from the monitoring inspection confirmed this assessment to be accurate. While the atmosphere around the academy is now much more orderly, calm and conducive to learning than before, where teaching remains weaker, a small minority of pupils do not focus on their work well enough.

Higher expectations have also been established through the introduction of a new uniform policy which most pupils adhere to well. In discussions, some pupils said that the higher standards of uniform had made them feel more proud of their academy and more grown-up. Similarly, academy expectations regarding sixth form dress have been tightened.

These improvements, together with much sharper systems for monitoring attendance and tackling pupils' absence, have resulted in improvements in overall attendance. The academy's records, which are now based on the accurate use of codes for recording absence, show that attendance has improved for all year groups compared to this time last year and particularly in year groups, for example Year 11, where previously it was low. The attendance seen in lessons during the inspection was good. Concerted action is also seeing a reduction in the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent. However, while records show that the attendance of



disadvantaged pupils has also improved considerably, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are still more likely to be persistently absent than other pupils in the academy.

Pupils now arrive punctually to school. Pupils know they will be punished if they arrive late for school and the 'late gate', used to ensure any pupils who arrive late are challenged, has proved to be an effective strategy in increasing punctuality at the start of the day. The academy has also stopped pupils from leaving the site at lunchtime. This strategy has improved punctuality to lessons in the afternoon where previously it was poor. All staff are taking responsibility to ensure pupils arrive to lessons on time. Good levels of supervision at break and lunchtimes and between lessons, together with the introduction of a warning bell, mean that lessons now start promptly.

At the time of the section 5 inspection, inspectors were highly critical of the academy's poor approach to monitoring the attendance, safety and well-being of pupils attending alternative provision. Now, rigorous records are kept which demonstrate that academy leaders know precisely how well these pupils are doing and whether they are attending their lessons elsewhere and being kept safe. Clear and robust arrangements are now in place to ensure the well-being of these pupils. Academy leaders receive daily notification of the pupils' attendance within 30 minutes of the start of each session so they can check on the well-being of any pupils who are not attending. Academy staff visit the alternative providers to check arrangements regarding pupils' safety are secure. The academy's child protection policy meets requirements and sets out clearly the processes and procedures staff should follow if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being. Staff training has been strengthened to include recent changes to legislation, including the duty placed on teachers to report any concerns they have about pupils who may be vulnerable to extremism, radicalisation or female genital mutilation. In discussions, pupils said they feel safe around the academy. They have good knowledge of how to stay safe online. As a result of these improvements, the academy's safeguarding procedures are now effective.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

The important improvements seen in the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and attendance provide clear evidence that leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures. However, it is too soon to assess the full impact these changes are having in raising pupils' achievement because the stronger assessment arrangements to check on pupils' progress have only recently been established.

The leadership of teaching and learning has been strengthened considerably with more effective monitoring systems in place than before. This includes monitoring through formal lesson observations, shorter drop-ins and scrutinies of pupils' work to ensure that staff are meeting the academy's raised expectations. In addition, the academy's arrangements for the management of teachers' performance, which previously were very weak, have been strengthened. Staff are now set targets which link to pupils' progress and these align well with the academy's overall improvement targets. Subject leaders are now held much more to account than before for the quality of their work and its impact on pupils' examination results.

The wide range of staff I met with during the inspection spoke highly of your impact immediately before and since the section 5 inspection. They reported how you have galvanised the academy and raised morale and expectations from a previously very low point. They recognise and value the increased scrutiny of their work because they understand that the quality of education provided by the academy has not been good enough in the past and needs to improve further. Staff also described how the culture in the academy has changed and is now characterised by openness, a greater willingness to challenge each other's practice and leaders' strong commitment to providing professional development. Key leaders are now working towards nationally accredited qualifications in leadership. Other staff, including middle leaders, have grown in confidence and effectiveness by taking up opportunities to observe the best practice in the academy and in schools judged by Ofsted to be outstanding. They can explain how these opportunities have helped strengthen their practice.

Disadvantaged pupils are now receiving much better support than before. Following the section 5 inspection, the academy quickly secured an external review of its use of additional funding to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to assess how this aspect of leadership and management could be improved. The review rightly endorsed the academy's approach and the strengthening of provision through the appointment of two pupil premium champions. Improved arrangements include the strengthening of transition arrangements into the academy for eligible pupils and much improved systems to engage with their parents and carers. Key staff are now held accountable for the achievement of disadvantaged pupils through the academy's revised performance management arrangements. The academic progress of disadvantaged pupils now features on the agenda for all meetings and staff have delivered training for governors to improve their understanding of this aspect of the academy's work.

However, while important improvements are being secured, the pace of improvement is being hindered by the trust's weak statement of action and the academy's weak improvement plan. While these documents set out clearly the

actions that need to be taken to improve the quality of education provided by the academy, and are rooted in the recommendations inspectors made at the section 5 inspection, they are not robust enough to support the academy's improvement. In particular, they do not set out precisely enough how the impact of each of the activities taken will be measured over time or who is responsible for checking that actions taken are having the necessary impact on pupils' achievement. This weakness also hinders the effectiveness and precision of the academy's self-evaluation. In discussions during the inspection, members of the governing body acknowledged that the plan does not make it easy enough for them to monitor the academy's progress towards the removal of special measures. It is essential that these weaknesses are quickly remedied so that all staff responsible have a sharper understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve further.

Records from the minutes of meetings of the governing body indicate that governors are proving more effective than before in holding the academy to account for pupils' achievement. For example, governors have held meetings with key staff, including subject leaders and the academy's pupil premium champions, to better understand the quality and impact of their work. Governors now make more regular visits to the academy to gain first-hand evidence of the improvements they are told about by senior staff. Governors have also attended the wide range of training provided by the local authority to improve their skills and understanding of how best to challenge and support the academy. At the time of the section 5 inspection, inspectors recommended an external review of governance. While this was taking place in the same week as the monitoring inspection, it has not been arranged quickly enough to identify how governance can further be improved.

### **External support**

Leaders and managers are receiving good support from the academy trust. This has been helped by the appointment of a campus headteacher who provides additional support for senior staff, particularly in implementing strategies to improve and monitor the quality of teaching. Both the campus headteacher and executive headteacher of the academy trust are based at the academy; they know that, at this time, improvements remain dependent on external support. Senior staff from the trust attend all meetings of the local governing body and have secured capital investment to improve the academy's facilities. Leaders from the trust have also brokered support for academy leaders and teaching staff from other schools within and beyond the trust. They have also played a key role in strengthening the academy's arrangements for the management of teachers' and others' performance. They have not ensured, however, that the statement of action produced in response to the section 5 inspection is sufficiently robust.

**Priorities for further improvement:**

- Ensure that the trust's statement of action and the academy improvement plan set out clearly:
  - precise success criteria, rooted in pupil progress information, against which academy staff, governors and trustees can measure how well the academy is progressing towards the removal of special measures
  - how the improvements will be measured over time
  - who is responsible for monitoring the impact of the actions taken, including governors.