

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Rebecca Staples
Principal
Danum Academy
Armthorpe Road
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN2 5QD

Dear Ms Staples

Special measures monitoring inspection of Danum Academy

Following my visit with Phil Smith, Her Majesty's Inspector and Lynn Kenworthy (Ofsted Inspector) to your academy on 13–14 January 2016, 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 that 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 that took place in September 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tanya Stuart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in September 2013.

- Ensure that all teaching in Years 7 to 11 is at least good by making certain that all teaching staff:
 - have high expectations of students and set demanding work
 - take accurate account of students' prior knowledge and understanding when planning lessons
 - carry out frequent checks on how well students are learning in a lesson and make changes when students need more support or need to be stretched and challenged further
 - provide sufficient opportunities for students to take a lead in their own learning
 - set homework that is relevant and demanding and follows an overall plan that is shared with students and parents, especially in Key Stage 3.

- Raise achievement rapidly, so that all students make at least expected progress, particularly in mathematics, science, and Key Stage 3 English, by:
 - making sure staff in all subjects pay close attention to improving students' numeracy, oral communication, reading and writing, especially punctuation, spelling and grammar
 - ensuring staff quickly identify all students who are not making enough progress in their work, and target them for support in lessons
 - making more effective use of additional adult support in lessons.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 13 to 14 January 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, focusing on the progress being made by current pupils. During the inspection, Year 11 pupils were sitting their mocks so the inspection team concentrated on visiting the lessons of pupils in Years 7 to 10. Documents were considered, including those to do with safeguarding, the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement, pupils' attendance and the leadership and management of the academy. Inspectors met with members of the School Improvement Board (SIB), which is the academy's governing body, middle leaders, teachers, learning support assistants, pupils and members of the trust. Pupils were also spoken to informally during the inspection.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, a number of staff have left. Most recently, five members of staff left at the end of the autumn term 2015. The academy has ensured that it is fully staffed.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The ability of senior leaders to articulate the strengths and weaknesses of lessons and consider the impact of these on pupils' learning remains strong. Senior leaders are effective in developing teachers' ability to ensure that pupils make more progress. Bespoke training combined with whole academy initiatives, such as the teaching and learning bulletin and briefing, mean that the quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring visit and pupils are making better progress.

Weak teaching is dealt with appropriately. A significant proportion of staff did not move up the pay scale this academic year. This is because they did not meet their targets and/or career stage expectations). Staff who did meet their targets (and career stage expectations), set through a rigorous and transparent process, were rewarded.

The academy introduced a new system of assessment in September 2015, after careful consideration of what would work for pupils, parents and staff. The system is simple to understand and allows all to check the progress of individual pupils and cohorts of pupils. This means action is being taken more quickly when pupils start to fall behind. A new system of target setting, introduced at the same time, is more rigorous and challenging but targets are still achievable.

Senior leaders are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the academy. They are working with all staff to ensure that the education provided for all pupils,

regardless of their starting points, is improving.

The SIB is provided with accurate information regarding the quality of teaching and the progress being made by pupils. The new system of assessment is helping in this. Members of the SIB ask challenging, relevant and focused questions of senior leaders and expect full and comprehensive answers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Senior leaders have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. These expectations are communicated clearly to staff, pupils and parents, partly through the new target-setting process. However, in some lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Over time, this means that in some subjects pupils are not making the progress they are making in other subjects.

The new assessment system means that all staff have accurate information about the progress being made by the pupils in each subject. In some lessons, for example German and geography, this information is used effectively to enable pupils to make better progress over time. However, the use of this information is not consistent in all lessons and this means pupils' progress is variable across subjects.

Much more homework is set. The homework is available to parents so that they are able to check what their children are meant to be doing. In some subjects, homework is challenging, supports the learning taking place in lessons and is well thought through. This is not the case across the academy.

Senior leaders led training on how to develop the relationship between the teacher and additional adults in the classroom. Much work has taken place to develop the role and improve the profile of additional adults. In some lessons, additional adults are used effectively to support and develop pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson, the additional adult was working with a group of more-able pupils. They were challenged to think about their answers and make links to other subjects. In other lessons, additional adults are less effective and spend part of the lesson not engaging with the pupils. This means pupils are not benefiting from the expertise which can be provided by the additional adults.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The proportion of pupils who attend the academy on a day-to-day basis is increasing. This is because of the consistent work being done, on a day-to-day basis, with pupils and their parents about the importance of attending the academy.

The academy has detailed knowledge about why certain pupils are not attending. The academy is working closely with other agencies to promote improved attendance and support parents and pupils.

Fixed-term exclusions have reduced significantly. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are repeatedly excluded has also reduced. This is because of the restructuring of the pastoral team and the preventative work being done on aspects such as anger management.

Outcomes for pupils

At GCSE level in 2015, pupils taking German, art, graphic design, photography, geography, physics and travel and tourism achieved results which were better than would be expected given the pupils' prior attainment. However, these results were not replicated across the academy and in some subjects pupils did far worse than they would be expected to do.

In 2015 at GCSE level, disadvantaged pupils closed the gap between themselves and their peers more in science than they did in English or mathematics. The new data system shows disadvantaged pupils are continuing to catch up with their peers across most year groups and in most subjects. The gap between girls' and boys' achievement in 2015 narrowed. The academy is not complacent and many strategies are in place to continue to improve further the achievement of boys and disadvantaged pupils.

Much work is being done to develop the pupils' literacy skills. There is a standard approach to the marking of spelling, punctuation and grammar. In some subjects this is followed well and pupils are encouraged to learn how to spell new words. However, it is not consistent. In some lessons, in particular music, geography, some science lessons, German, hairdressing and horticulture, expectations of pupils' oracy skills are high. Pupils are expected to answer questions fully and develop their answers to enable them to practise saying what they need to write in the GCSE examination or in their assessments. The academy has done some training on developing standard expectations for presentation of mathematical aspects such as graphs. It is too early to judge the impact of these strategies.

Overall, across the academy, pupils, regardless of their starting points, are making much better progress. This is especially so in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

The academy provides two programmes to raise aspirations in Key Stage 4: hairdressing and horticulture. Both these courses provide the pupils with the opportunity to complete an externally accredited course which could lead to employment or further education. The pupils on these courses are able to speak confidently and articulately about the opportunities that they are being given. They are also optimistic about their futures and next steps.

External support

Support for the academy is provided through the trust. Since September 2015, the trust has carried out reviews of English and science. These reviews gave senior leaders and the departments an external view of the strengths and weaknesses of the departments. The reviews culminated in comprehensive feedback highlighting how to improve certain aspects. It is too early to judge the impact of these reviews but they were considered to be helpful by the academy.