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17 March 2016

Rachel Swaffield  
Headteacher  
Gilbert Inglefield Academy  
Vandyke Road  
Leighton Buzzard  
Bedfordshire  
LU7 3FU

Dear Mrs Swaffield

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Gilbert Inglefield Academy**

Following my visit with Peter Whear, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 March 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 which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015. 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.**

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Central Bedfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the teaching of all groups of students, particularly the most able students and disadvantaged students, so achievement rapidly improves by making sure that:
  - work is engaging and set at the right level for students of different abilities in all subjects
  - students' work is marked frequently and teachers give guidance on how students can improve their work
  - students are moved on to new work as soon as they are ready
  - all teachers insist on students presenting their work neatly and accurately
  - students' spelling, punctuation and grammar are checked in all subjects
  - work which is missed or unfinished is caught up.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by:
  - ensuring that all mathematics teachers have a good level of knowledge about the subject
  - making sure that students are given sufficient time to practise particular skills
  - providing the most able students with regular opportunities to study more complicated mathematical problems
  - making sure that practical activities are well matched to the key skills and concepts that students are learning.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - governors develop the skills required to carefully monitor the impact of the pupil premium and other funding, and robustly hold the academy to account for the quality of its teaching and students' achievement
  - the mathematics action plan is rapidly implemented and regularly monitored for its impact on students' achievement
  - students' achievement is checked in detail so that any underachievement or differences between the achievement of different groups of students can be tackled quickly
  - subject leaders are sufficiently skilled to check achievement and teaching in their areas and that they are held to account for how this information is used to secure improvements

- the attendance of different groups of students is regularly checked, particularly for disadvantaged students
- all students feel confident that any bullying will be dealt with quickly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 March 2016**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and held meetings with the headteacher, nominated senior and middle leaders, four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and two groups of pupils. Inspectors also met the school's new puppy.

### **Context**

Although there have been few changes since the last inspection, staffing has been afflicted by unusually high absence, mainly due to seasonal illness. Several teachers were absent or unwell during this visit. One pupil has been permanently excluded since the last visit.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The school has built on the improvements noted at the previous visit in order to secure better outcomes for all pupils, and particularly the groups previously identified as underachieving. The school's assessment information indicates that pupils are making better progress, notably in mathematics, where standards had previously lagged behind English. Measures taken to raise standards at Key Stage 2 in mathematics and English sensibly balance the need for short-term targeting and intervention with sustainable improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum, such as timetabling lessons in mathematical problem solving.

Although there is due emphasis on improving outcomes in mathematics and English, higher expectations are evident in subjects across the curriculum. Higher-attaining pupils, and individuals with specific aptitudes for particular subjects, say that they are finding the work more challenging.

Whole-staff training in promoting literacy across the curriculum has placed suitable emphasis on improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work showed little evidence yet of the strategy in action. The accuracy and quality of pupils' handwriting is an aspect of literacy that impedes the progress of a number of pupils because their writing lacks fluency and does not reflect their understanding. Targeted support for individual pupils is effective, but – as with spelling, punctuation and grammar – it is too early to see any impact of a whole-school approach.

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

The quality of teaching and learning continue to strengthen, and the improvements noted previously have been well consolidated. Despite being badly affected by staff

illness, teachers made every effort to showcase some of the initiatives that have been developed since the start of the school year. Leaders know where provision is weak and are taking suitable steps to drive whole-school improvements while also targeting support for individual staff. Teachers have sustained their efforts with marking, but the most significant improvement is in teachers' expectations, with higher standards expected of pupils' behaviour, and the quality and quantity of their work. This is immediately evident in the calm and orderly environment in lessons and the care that pupils take in their books, even when this does not come naturally. Giving pupils positive feedback, through regular marking, has helped to raise pupils' expectations.

Teachers are much more mindful of the need to stretch and challenge pupils, and this has been noted by the pupils themselves, who say that they are now less likely to be 'spoon fed' information. Most pupils appreciate this because they get more of a sense of achievement, although a few yearn for the easier life that they used to enjoy.

Teachers are using resources to plan a wider range of activities to engage pupils in learning, promote better understanding and develop key skills. On this visit, lessons got off to a prompt start because routines are well established and starter activities were well prepared. Observations in music, English, French, mathematics and physical education demonstrate that pupils make impressive progress when well-planned tasks are skilfully directed with carefully focused questioning. In general, teachers are planning more ambitious outcomes for each lesson, but do not always model what they want, and pupils sometimes struggle to envisage what is required. Learning proceeds at a brisker pace than previously, although in some classes the pace of learning is still rather gentle, either because teachers are too easily satisfied with pupils' answers or because pupils finish quickly and are happy to sit quietly.

Pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills, including their handwriting, continue to present a barrier to learning and achievement for a small but significant number of pupils, particularly when they cannot read or write fluently or grasp basic place value and number bonds. Teachers are having to systematically support these skills across all subjects, but some have embraced this responsibility more readily than others. Too many opportunities are missed to promote good literacy and numeracy.

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

Senior leaders have successfully improved pupils' behaviour and are managing misbehaviour more effectively. They monitor closely the frequency of referrals from teachers for disruptive behaviour and have an effective system, using internal isolation for pupils at risk of exclusion, and an effective restorative process to reintegrate pupils who struggle to meet the school's expectations. Incidents of serious disruption have halved since January 2015, and figures for bullying or physical aggression have reduced markedly over the last two years.

Strategies to improve attendance are having a positive impact, with overall attendance rising to 95.3% in the year to date. Leaders can point to a number of case studies where targeted intervention and support have been highly effective in reducing persistent absence.

On this visit, pupils modelled positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. The climate in lessons is noticeably better because pupils are responding to teachers' higher expectations: they settled quickly at the start of each session, followed instructions, volunteered answers and cooperated sensibly when working together. Pupils say that behaviour in lessons is much improved, and significantly better than last year. However, they are quick to point out that lessons are much more likely to be disrupted when they have a cover teacher. Subject reviews of mathematics and English, undertaken in December and February respectively, reported some low-level disruption.

Outcomes from the pupil survey, conducted in November, show marked improvements in pupils' views and attitudes. The overwhelmingly positive responses from the 60% of pupils who completed the survey reflect the school's rapid improvements and the pupils' more positive engagement.

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

The headteacher continues to set a demanding pace and skilfully prioritises developments to maximise their impact. Despite the tribulations caused by staff absence, the improvements noted previously have been well consolidated, and several of the issues highlighted at the last visit have been tackled. The drive to strengthen marking, for example, has been maintained, so that teachers and pupils are seeing the benefit of high-quality feedback. Training to improve teaching has also had a positive impact because teachers are more consistent in applying the school's expectations and are prepared to be more ambitious.

Senior and middle leaders are fulfilling their roles more confidently and effectively. Subject leaders, for example, are more purposeful and systematic in checking the work of their departments and are more analytical in looking for impact when evaluating improvements.

Governors continue to monitor the work of the school closely. They are sufficiently well informed to be able to hold senior leaders to account by asking the right questions. The governing body balances well the need for support and challenge.

### **External support**

The school is drawing on a suitably wide range of external support to guide staff training, moderate judgements and evaluate provision. Support for middle leaders and planned developments in teaching and learning have been particularly well received.