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Mrs Carolyn Barker
Headteacher
Hope Wood Academy
Crawlaw Road
Easington Colliery
Peterlee
County Durham
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Dear Mrs Barker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hope Wood Academy

Following my visit to your school on 1 and 2 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.

This was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures, following the inspection which took place in June 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 school may seek to 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 Secretary of State, the Chair of the Ascent Multi-Academy Trust, the Corporate Director: Children's and Adults' Services for Durham and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve the safeguarding of students by:
 - ensuring that all members of staff and governors are regularly trained in safeguarding and child protection
 - making sure that all required safe recruitment checks are carried out and recorded on the single central record
 - completing detailed records about all serious incidents, including where restraint is used, as quickly as possible afterwards
 - routinely reviewing information about serious incidents by senior leaders and governors to ensure areas for improvement in the academy's provision are identified and put in place as quickly as possible
 - ensuring that the academy's safeguarding policy is consistently implemented and rigorously monitored.

- Improve the quality of teaching, including for post-16 students, so that it is at least consistently good and enables all pupils in all subjects to be challenged in their learning and reach their full potential by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - ensuring accurate assessment of pupils' attainments and progress, including rigorous moderation of teachers' assessments with other schools, is carried out regularly
 - raising expectations and ensuring that teachers take full account of what each pupil already knows and can do so that activities challenge them
 - improving the use of assessment and knowledge of how to challenge and increase the progress of the most able pupils and those with the most profound learning difficulties
 - providing high-quality professional development and training for staff focused on eliminating gaps in subject knowledge, particularly in the teaching of reading, writing and numeracy
 - ensuring that staff understand and implement the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - improving the academy's approach to the teaching of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) so that pupils learn new sounds quickly and are given books that allow them to put into practice what they have learned
 - ensuring there is a rigorous and effective approach to teaching literacy and numeracy in all areas of the curriculum.

- Improve pupils' behaviour, including their attendance, by:
 - ensuring an up-to-date behaviour policy, with clear sanctions and rewards, is understood by pupils, parents and staff, and is consistently implemented

- ensuring that behaviour incidents are rigorously logged and initiatives to bring about improvements are evaluated
 - reporting attendance patterns and information about sanctions, rewards and incidents routinely to governors
 - increasing attendance through setting ambitious targets, and working closely with the pupils, their parents, and other agencies, to achieve these.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
- rigorously monitoring important aspects of the academy's work, in particular pupils' progress and their behaviour, and the quality of teaching, so that leaders and managers have a thorough understanding of how well each pupil is learning
 - ensuring this information is drawn together to provide an accurate self-evaluation of how well the academy is performing and a well-matched improvement plan
 - making sure all of the pupil premium and primary school sports funding is used effectively
 - improving communication of academy leaders and managers, including governors, with other staff, so that the policies and developments are implemented consistently and morale is improved
 - ensuring performance management is rigorous and that targets set for teachers are specific and effective to help improve pupils' progress
 - ensuring that expectations and responsibilities for leaders at all levels are clear and detailed within their job role information.
- Improve governance by improving communication with parents so that they understand who the governors are and their roles and responsibilities, and are fully involved in and kept up to date with academy developments.

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

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

Report on the fifth inspection on 1–2 March 2016

Evidence

There were regular meetings over the two days between the inspector and senior staff to discuss the progress of the school since the previous monitoring inspection visit. Discussions also took place with the staff responsible for English and mathematics. There was further discussion with the chief executive and link trustee from Ascent Multi-Academy Trust. A range of documents, provided by senior staff, were read and evaluated. During the inspection, senior staff joined the inspector in visiting almost every class in the school, during which a joint activity of scrutinising pupils' workbooks in English and mathematics was undertaken. The inspector also observed movement in and around the school, including supervision at breaks and lunchtime. The inspector observed six part-lessons separately. Each observation included a detailed review of pupils' workbooks, particularly in English and mathematics, along with a review of the 'learning journals' used in the early years.

Context

As in previous monitoring inspection visits to the school, staff changes continue to occur, particularly at middle and senior leadership levels. Two class teachers are currently absent due to long-term health issues. Three new experienced teachers started at the school in January 2016, along with a seconded experienced senior leader to cover the long-term absence of two assistant headteachers. Two vacancies remain, one primary and one secondary, both of which are currently being covered by supply or temporary staff. Further restructuring of senior leadership roles and responsibilities has gone through the approval stages of the trust board, with the implementation date imminent. In addition, there will be new appointments of a head of the academy, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and an academy improvement lead.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The overall effectiveness of leadership and management is continuing to improve. The recent appointments of middle leaders are adding to the capacity of the school to bring about the necessary improvements. Senior leaders continue to drive change across the school, not least in challenging teachers to improve their practice.

The school's joint development plan/proprietor's statement of action continues to provide a clear focus on the key areas for ongoing improvements. This plan is detailed and skilfully combines the areas for improvement from the previous inspection report with school priorities and actions for further improvement. There are clear and realistic timescales and milestones to ensure that senior leaders and trustees are fully aware of the progress being made across all priority areas. The trust's 'monitoring, challenge and support' group, which started around the time of the previous inspection monitoring visit in November 2015, holds senior leaders to

account for the quality of provision and the progress being made against identified weaknesses.

The executive headteacher's self-evaluation of the school's current provision is detailed and honest. It recognises that there are still weak areas which need to urgently improve.

The quality of the curricular provision continues to improve, especially in the early years and in the 16–19 provision. Staff recognise that curricular development is an ongoing area for improvement. Although substantial progress has been made since the school was placed in special measures, further work is needed on the curriculum to ensure that all pupils receive a suitably balanced and challenging learning experience in all subject areas.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The required improvements in this area continue to challenge school leaders, but there now exists a systematic and robust overview of the quality of teaching across the school. This is helping senior leaders to target individualised support programmes for those teachers most in need. These interventions are making a difference to the overall quality of teaching, but there is still a need to achieve more consistency across the school.

There has been good progress in improving the quality of teaching in the early years. The identified weakness from the previous inspection monitoring visit, where 'learning journals' described what the children were doing rather than what they had learned, has been addressed. Also, the previous lack of contribution of parents or carers to the 'learning journals' has been tackled very effectively. There is now a better partnership between the school and parents or carers, which is benefiting the children's learning.

From a position of weak teaching and a poor curriculum for learners in the 16-19 group, the quality of both these areas has improved.

The quality of pupil assessment information is continuing to improve. The strategy for the termly collection and analysis of assessment data is enabling leaders and teachers to target pupils who are most in need of additional support and provide more focused teaching for pupils.

Better assessment information is supporting the overall quality of teachers' planning. This has improved significantly over the period of the monitoring inspection visits. Work is regularly marked, and pupils are now in a good position to know how they can improve the standard of their work and so make better progress in their learning.

There remains a high reliance on the use of worksheets in almost all subjects. While some teachers are very skilful at using worksheets to develop and consolidate pupils'

knowledge, understanding and skills, there are still many examples of their use where they do not aid pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The school staff are continuing to develop their ability to manage the very challenging behaviour of a small minority of pupils. There is now a more consistent approach to dealing with behaviour. This includes a more focused role for teaching assistants in helping class teachers to manage those pupils who go off task, disturbing not only their own but others' learning. Throughout this inspection, the overwhelming majority of pupils behaved sensibly and were generally attentive and interested in their learning.

Following a recent incident in the school, senior staff are now aware of the need to update school policy and practice in dealing with harmful behaviour of pupils on other pupils. The school intends to use a trust policy on this aspect, but it has yet to be included in an updated child protection policy.

The supervision of pupils at breaks and lunchtimes is generally thorough, with staff in high-visibility jackets being strategically placed in all areas of the school. This ensures that all pupils are behaving appropriately, especially towards each other. The observation of primary and secondary breaktimes did show, however, a delay in some staff getting onto some areas and taking up their supervisory position. The school will need to take steps to address this.

Outcomes for pupils

The rate of progress in pupils' learning continues to improve, especially in the early years and the primary phase. Although secondary-aged pupils are also making progress, it is more inconsistent, especially at Key Stage 4. Senior leaders are aware of these inconsistencies and have prioritised actions in English and mathematics to bring about the required improvements. The early indications are that improvements are being made, especially in Key Stage 3 in English. These interventions and support programmes are now beginning to have an impact on pupils' acquisition and use of key literacy and numeracy skills. Learners in the 16–19 provision are also beginning to make better progress because of the more appropriate and relevant curriculum now being provided.

External support

The support provided by officers from the Ascent Multi-Academy Trust and external consultants is continuing to help the school make progress in key areas. Senior school leaders are now being held to account for progress and improvement by trustees. Trustees have a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the ongoing actions required by leaders to make it even better.