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25 September 2015

Mr Michael Astley  
Principal  
St Peter's Academy  
Fenton Manor  
Fenton  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST4 2RR

Dear Mr Astley

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Peter's Academy**

Following my visit with Alun Williams, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Julie Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 23 and 24 September, 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 second monitoring inspection since the academy 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:

### **The academy is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and the 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 interim executive board, the chairman of the Woodard Academies Trust, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Lichfield and the Executive Director of People, Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that the progress of all groups of students, particularly disadvantaged students and boys, is at least good, by ensuring that all:
  - students' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well in all subjects
  - work is planned to meet the needs of students, and takes account of their reading ages and what they already know and can do
  - lessons stimulate, engage and challenge all students well
  - teachers have high expectations of what all students, and in particular the most able, can achieve
  - teachers' questioning is probing and requires students to consider their answers and respond in full sentences
  - teachers implement the academy's marking policy and check that advice and guidance are followed.
  
- Ensure that the interim executive board (IEB) holds senior leaders to account for regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and providing accurate and timely information on the performance of staff and the progress of all groups of students.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring all leaders rigorously monitor teaching so that weaknesses are effectively addressed within robust performance management procedures – ensuring that the impact of additional funding, including the pupil premium and that for the Year 7 catch-up programme, is evaluated so that disadvantaged students benefit and gaps in attainment close
  - implementing a broad and balanced curriculum which provides good opportunities for students' personal development, in particular their understanding of how to avoid becoming vulnerable to influences of radicalisation and sexual grooming.
  
- An external review of the academy'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 second monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 September 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, visited lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, other senior leaders, teachers with responsibilities in the academy, groups of students, the chair of the IEB, the consultant to the Principal and a representative of the sponsor.

### **Context**

The Principal took up post on 1 September 2015 and there has been a recent re-alignment of leadership responsibilities within the academy. Six new teachers were appointed at the beginning of the autumn term and the posts of head of English and head of mathematics are currently being advertised. An experienced former headteacher has also been employed as a consultant to the Principal.

### **Outcomes for students**

In the public examinations of the summer of 2015, many students, both boys and girls, did not reach the levels of attainment of which they were capable. This was the result of poor teaching over time and inaccurate predictions. Consequently, as students made slow progress and academy leaders were not fully aware of this, effective action did not take place.

The provisional 2015 results show that too few students made the progress expected of them in English and mathematics and the proportion of students achieving five A\* to C grades, including in English and mathematics, at GCSE level will be well below the national average. However, some students made the progress expected of them in some subject areas. For example, students achieved well in geography, biology, chemistry and physics.

The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and other students in the academy reduced in 2015. However, attainment for both groups was below expectations. Students currently in the academy, particularly in Key Stage 3, are making improved progress. This was evident in the lessons observed and in the books inspectors looked at. More students, including disadvantaged students, are now working at the level expected of them.

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

The quality of teaching is improving but there remains too much that is not having a positive impact on learning and some inadequate teaching remains.

Weak teaching is characterised by some of the aspects identified at the time of the section 5 inspection. Too many teachers do not have high expectations of what students can achieve. They do not plan lessons which stimulate and challenge students to make rapid progress as they do not use the wealth of information available to them on each student to inform the activities they devise to promote learning. Many staff do not use the positive relationships they have with students to promote confidence in exploring ideas or working things out for themselves. Too often, students are unsure of the purpose of the lesson as there is no clear emphasis on learning.

The academy marking policy is not followed consistently. There are examples of good marking that helps students to make progress but, in weaker lessons, students do not understand how to improve their work as they lack clear guidance on how to do this. Peer assessment, which has a positive impact in some lessons, is not used effectively throughout the academy. Students are often unable to write useful comments on how to improve the learning of their classmates and these comments are not routinely checked by class teachers. Consequently, students do not make the progress of which they are capable.

There is evidence of literacy and numeracy development in some subject areas. For example, in a science lesson observed during this inspection, students were taught how to use mathematical formulae and the use of the correct units of measurement was emphasised. Incorrect spellings had been identified and the students had written the words out correctly three times. However, this practice is not evident across the academy. In some books misspelt words are highlighted and not corrected and in others they are ignored. Staff are not consistently modelling the use of good English in their written comments in students' books.

Teachers' expectations of the quality of students' oral responses to questions vary considerably. For example, in the more effective lessons, teachers insist on students using full sentences and expect them to use academic language and precise, subject-specific terms. The teachers use language that will help the students to put together high-quality responses to examination questions and this encourages students to use appropriate language for the purpose of improving their learning. In other lessons, students use language inaccurately and do not use full sentences to respond to questions.

There is some strong teaching in the academy and this is making a difference to students' enjoyment of learning and develops their knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, in a religious education lesson observed during the inspection, the teacher set tasks to make the students think deeply about the topic, asked probing questions and followed those up with further questions that made the students consider their responses. The teacher also used her excellent subject knowledge to prepare the students to tackle examination questions. There was a shared expectation that all the students would produce high-quality responses.

As a result of significant concern about the reliability of teachers' assessment in a number of subject areas, academy leaders are taking concerted action to remedy this situation. They have introduced a cycle of internal examination, initiated close quality assurance and moderation of assessment, and changed the times when staff enter information into the academy system. These measures have made the whole process more rigorous. As a result, academy leaders and members of the IEB have a more realistic understanding of current levels of achievement and can take informed action to remedy underperformance.

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

Students are showing an increasing amount of pride in themselves and the academy. They usually wear their uniform correctly and quickly smarten up their appearance if they are asked to do so. Books are well looked after, the academy building is well maintained and there is very little litter. Students are polite and courteous, for example holding doors open for visitors, and they enjoy positive relationships with staff and their peers.

The students who spoke with inspectors were very positive about the academy and keen to share the improvements that have taken place since January and particularly since the start of this term. They said behaviour had improved, that the academy is a very safe place and that there is very little bullying. They told inspectors that there was a direct email and telephone line that they could use if they had any concerns over their welfare, or that of their friends, and they emphasised that staff cared about them.

Issues associated with safety are covered in the curriculum and students are taught to stay safe and behave in a safe manner. Attendance has improved since the section 5 inspection but absence information about groups and individuals is not scrutinised carefully in order to inform action to improve attendance further.

A small number of instances of off-task behaviour were seen in lessons during the inspection but almost all students demonstrated that they were keen to learn. However, as teachers do not always devise activities to promote good learning, they are not taking full advantage of this enthusiasm to enable students to make the most progress they can.

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

The Principal, supported by senior leaders, the consultant to the Principal, the IEB and the Woodard Academies Trust, is driving improvement in the academy. He has a clear understanding of what needs to be done and has prioritised improving the quality of teaching as a key action. Measures are now in place to monitor teaching more effectively and address weaknesses. For example, regular reviews of subject areas are taking place, which will inform further action, and subject leaders and

class teachers are held more closely to account for the quality of teaching and the progress of students in their groups.

Far more robust procedures for managing the performance of teachers are now being used. The teachers' standards and the academy's priorities inform teachers' targets, which focus on improving teaching and students' outcomes. Pay progression will now be more closely linked to performance. The best-paid teachers will be expected to do more to improve the academy and will be held more closely to account for their impact. This did not happen in the past.

Under the guidance of the new Principal, the leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is beginning to have a more positive impact. However, the quality of subject leadership is variable. Academy leaders are taking action to address this and permanent heads of English and mathematics will be appointed in the near future.

The Year 7 catch-up programme and pupil premium have been used to fund a range of activities, and attainment gaps between disadvantaged students and other students in the academy are closing. However, information gathered about the various interventions has not been analysed to assess impact or to inform further action. Consequently, academy leaders do not know which activities have been the most successful and they are not yet in a position to take further action to close the attainment gap between disadvantaged students in the academy and other students nationally.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium took place after the first monitoring visit. Academy leaders accepted its findings as a true reflection of the situation within the academy. Plans are in place to address the issues raised but these need to be further informed by internal information and immediate action needs to take place.

The academy now provides a broad and balanced curriculum for its students. Year 11 students are following appropriate courses and there are good opportunities for students' personal development. For example, the students who spoke to inspectors had a clear understanding of how to avoid becoming vulnerable to the influences of radicalisation and sexual grooming. Procedures and practices to keep students safe are in place.

The Principal is beginning to take action to improve parental engagement. He contacts parents regularly with positive news about their children but overall communication with parents is not effective. The website is not up to date and almost half of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would not recommend the academy to other parents.

The IEB now receives accurate and timely information on the performance of staff and the progress of all groups of students. Consequently, members hold senior

leaders more closely to account for regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and the outcomes of students.

### **External support**

The Woodard Academies Trust has provided a range of support to improve the academy. It appointed the Principal and a consultant to assist the Principal's drive to ensure that there is consistently good teaching resulting in better outcomes for the students. The Trust has provided members and funding for the IEB so that it comprises people with a range of skills to support improvement. It has provided additional time for the Trust partner to evaluate provision, report findings and inform action, and it has given support to improve teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes in English and mathematics. Trust members sourced the pupil premium review, provided funding for additional resources and facilitated the establishment of a strategic partnership with an outstanding school. The human resources team in the Trust supported the re-alignment of responsibilities in the academy and senior leaders have access to collaborative networks across the Trust.

Trust members are now visiting the academy on a regular basis and as they receive reliable information about teaching and outcomes they are providing more challenge to senior leaders.