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Andrew MacKenzie
Deputy Headteacher
The Baverstock Academy
501 Bells Lane
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Dear Mr MacKenzie

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Baverstock Academy

Following my visit with Rob Steed, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 14 and 15 October 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 and your colleagues made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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:

The academy is not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics and science, so that the progress and attainment of all groups of students, especially disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs, improves rapidly by:
 - ensuring that teachers receive good training and support to set appropriately challenging targets for students and to assess accurately their progress in lessons and over time
 - ensuring that the long-term assessment information and the ongoing assessments from lessons are used continually to plan and teach lessons at the right level for different groups of students
 - making sure that teachers mark books frequently enough and in a way that informs students about their successes and the next steps they need to take
 - consistently and effectively challenging low level disruption so that the focus is on learning in all lessons
 - ensuring that the curriculum in the LEAP provision closely mirrors that in the mainstream part of the academy so that students do not fall behind with their preparation for examinations at the end of Year 11.

- Improve leadership and management so that all actions drive improvement in students' achievement by:
 - establishing a clear basis on which to set challenging targets for all students to enable them to make good progress
 - ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels frequently and rigorously analyse the progress that all groups of students are making in all subjects, including in Years 7 and 8, identify where and why there is underachievement and take carefully planned actions to put this right
 - implementing a rigorous system to evaluate the quality of teaching throughout the academy, using information about students' progress as well as observations and scrutinies of students' work, and putting in place appropriate strategies to improve teaching where this is needed
 - analysing more thoroughly other information gathered in the academy, such as attendance and behaviour data, and using this to target actions in a more focused way
 - minimising the use of part-time timetables for LEAP students in line with government guidance and ensuring that correct exclusion procedures are followed if it is necessary for a student to be removed from the academy site for disciplinary reasons
 - reviewing the frequency with which BIC students integrate into the main academy

- ensuring that governors receive clear, analytical reports on students' progress and behaviour and the quality of teaching so they can be more effective in challenging and supporting the academy.

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

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 October 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and the academy's website and met with leaders and staff, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors spoke to another governor by telephone. Inspectors were not furnished with the academy's latest action plan and evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors observed parts of 19 lessons, including in mathematics and science, 13 of which were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors reviewed the academy's arrangements for safeguarding. They also observed the academy's provision for students at risk from exclusion, entitled 'Learn, Engage, Achieve, Progress' (LEAP), and its provision for newly arrived students learning English as an additional language. There were too few responses on Parent View to take account of parents' views.

Context

The headteacher was absent during the inspection visit. Since the last inspection visit the number of teaching staff has been reduced, including in science. A new head of modern foreign languages has been appointed from September 2015. The head of music was on maternity leave as were three other teachers. The new Chair of the Governing Body has been in post for two weeks. The provision for students new to learning English as an additional language, called 'Baverstock in the City' (BIC), which was situated about five miles away, has been relocated to the academy's main building. New arrivals now receive an appropriate two-week induction on site.

Outcomes for pupils

Provisional GCSE results for 2015 show a further decline in the proportion of students gaining five or more grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics. Leaders had predicted that results were set to significantly improve this year. The percentage of students who made at least expected progress in English and mathematics from Key Stage 2 to 4 also fell, particularly in mathematics. The proportion making more than expected progress also fell in English but rose slightly in mathematics. However, against all of these indicators, outcomes were well below the national averages for 2014. The gaps between predictions and outcomes at GCSE in science were wide, and leaders acknowledge students were not well prepared for assessments under examination conditions.

Outcomes for disadvantaged students also declined despite an investment of just under £400,000 from the pupil premium funding. The gap in attainment at GCSE widened further and the proportion of these students making at least expected progress also fell in English and mathematics. The proportion making more than expected progress fell in English and rose slightly in mathematics but the figures

remain well below the average for all students nationally. The academy's own information reveals that disadvantaged students did not make as much progress as other students in the academy or nationally so consequently they fell further behind their peers.

Outcomes were also particularly low for boys, disabled students and those with special educational needs. Not enough of the most-able students did as well as they should have done, given their starting points.

Attainment was low in a range of other subjects. In French, for example, none of the students predicted to gain at least a grade C at GCSE achieved this. Results were also well below predictions in geography and history. Results were closer to those expected by leaders in a few subjects, including catering, textiles, and art.

Information from the academy suggests that students currently in Years 10 and 11 are set to exceed the wrongly predicted results for 2015. Evidence from lessons and students' work does not support these forecasts however.

In the sixth form, the proportion of students gaining three or more A levels at grades A to E fell. However, overall results remained well above those from two years ago and previous years. The proportion gaining two or more A to E grades rose and the proportion gaining at least one remained at 100% for the second year running.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Over time, the quality of teaching is inadequate, as demonstrated by student outcomes and predicted future outcomes. However, the academy judged in the summer term that the quality of teaching is good with much that is outstanding. In too many lessons, teachers' expectations are low and behaviour is not well managed. Teachers are too slow to challenge low-level disruptive behaviour and, as a result, students' behaviour deteriorates still further. Where the pace of learning slackens and work is pitched at the wrong level of challenge, students quickly become restless and distracted.

Teachers too often do not adhere to the academy's marking policy. There are examples of inaccurate work marked as correct and errors left uncorrected. When teachers ask for a written response from students, this is either not done or not marked by teachers consistently enough.

Teachers' checks on how well students are doing and the targets set are over-optimistic. Students did not perform as well as expected under examination conditions. Teachers are seeking to address this through more regular and rigorous examination-condition assessments, particularly in science.

Too many lessons, especially lower sets in Key Stage 3, are taught by non-specialists who lack the subject knowledge, support and training to teach the subject. This is having a particularly detrimental effect on outcomes in geography, history and religious education. An exception to this is in mathematics, where an effective training programme has led to some success in overcoming a shortage of qualified mathematics teachers.

In other lessons seen, students were supported well in their learning by their peers who marked their work and suggested improvements. Where students knew grade criteria well they were secure in what they needed to do to improve their work. Teachers successfully motivated students from a range of abilities and aptitudes by planning lessons which captured their interest and offered a sufficient level of challenge.

In LEAP, work is set appropriately to enable students to re-engage more quickly into the mainstream curriculum, especially for those preparing for examinations. Older new arrivals learning English as an additional language are also being prepared much more quickly for introduction into subject lessons. In the case of late arrivals in Year 11, students are prepared for transition to college.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Behaviour in lessons is almost always linked to the extent that teachers are able to engage students in their learning and not to the ability of the learner. For example, in lessons seen in English, Year 11 students' attitudes to learning were better in a low set than they were in a top set. At Key Stage 3, too many students are switched off from learning, for example in languages, and they respond accordingly with instances of low-level disruption.

Students respond well when they are conducting practical investigations in lessons. Where students find lessons interesting and relevant to their possible future career paths, for example in engineering in the sixth form, their behaviour is exemplary. They are highly conscious of health and safety procedures when using potentially dangerous equipment.

In discussion, students confirmed inspectors' findings in lessons that behaviour is not as good in Key Stage 3 as it is in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. They reported that behaviour depended on how well it was managed by individual teachers.

When students are moving in and around the academy, behaviour is at times noisy, but students reported that they felt safe. There have been no permanent exclusions for five years.

The current attendance of students eligible for the pupil premium is higher than it is for other students in the academy. However, overall attendance is well below the national average, at less than 90%.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders at all levels were inaccurate in their predictions for GCSE outcomes in 2015. Also, based on their summer term evaluation, leaders have a significantly over-generous view of teaching over time. Consequently, predictions for students currently in the academy are unrealistically high. Leaders analyse the progress of different groups of students every half term, but the information entered remains unreliable as an indicator of future performance. Regular analysis has ultimately had no impact in improving outcomes for students in 2015, especially for those in most urgent need of catching up.

In the absence of the headteacher, it was not possible for inspectors to see an updated action plan in response to the key issues for development from the last inspection. Neither was it possible to receive an update of how leaders currently see the strengths and weaknesses of the academy. There were plans for the headteacher to meet each subject leader to discuss examination outcomes but this has not been fully carried out, and other senior leaders have not been involved in this process. Interim leadership arrangements had not been established at the time of the visit. Senior leaders show a determination to bring about rapid improvements, however.

Leaders rely too much on teacher performance in lessons to judge teaching rather than triangulating evidence with students' work and checking the accuracy of teachers' predicted results. In individual lesson observations, leaders are accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses but these judgements are not reflected in the academy's current overall profile of teaching over time. Leaders have not tackled the weaknesses in teaching that they have identified in lesson observations strongly enough through coaching or training.

The extent to which heads of subjects check the quality of teaching varies greatly, from regular termly formal observations backed up by frequent informal drop-ins, to very little. Nonetheless, all subject leaders seen by inspectors know what good teaching looks like.

Leaders have not been effective in the use of pupil premium funds to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students. Outcomes for these students have declined. There has been insufficient evaluation of its impact and no information published on what changes are proposed to improve outcomes this year.

Governors, many of whom are new to their role, are insufficiently aware of the full extent of shortcomings in teaching and outcomes for students. However, they

recognise the academy is not making enough progress towards coming out of special measures. There are plans for governor subject links but this has not yet happened. Governors have not sufficiently held leaders to account for the impact of the academy's pupil premium expenditure.

The headteacher's written report to the governing body accounting for recent GCSE results in English and mathematics focused too much on grade boundary changes in mathematics. The number of students who just missed a C grade and cases where appeals for re-marking have been made were also cited as reasons for the underachievement. The report did little to explain the considerable gulf between expectation and outcomes in the large majority of other subjects.

Communication with parents and the public is not effective enough. Key information that should be on the academy's website is either missing or out of date. This means that parents are not sufficiently informed about recent Ofsted inspection outcomes, examination results, the curriculum, or the impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding.

Arrangements for safeguarding are very detailed and thorough. Leaders go to extensive lengths to ensure that students are kept safe in the academy and know how to keep themselves safe outside of the academy in potentially dangerous situations.

Leaders have responded well to improve their LEAP and provision for students for whom English is an additional language. Now that BIC has been relocated, new arrivals are taught at the academy where they can more easily be integrated into mainstream lessons. Other students in the academy still perceive LEAP to be an easy option with early finishes but leaders have taken effective steps to ensure this is no longer the case.

External support

External support has been limited and ineffective. There is no involvement with the local authority and Baverstock is a stand-alone academy. As a result, the academy has received no external challenge. The academy had been receiving support over its action plan from the headteacher from another local authority, although this has now come to an end. Students' work and test papers were externally marked and moderated but this only sought to reinforce the academy's inaccurate prediction of outcomes at GCSE. A science review has been very recently conducted by a neighbouring Birmingham school and there are plans to work further with this school. Arrangements for peer mentoring within the South Birmingham group are at an early stage of development and the school has recently joined with the Birmingham Education Partnership.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders and governors should ensure that:
 - in the absence of the headteacher, effective interim leadership arrangements are put in place as quickly as possible
 - effective procedures are in put place for the academy to receive good-quality external support and challenge
 - the academy’s website is up-to-date and meets all its statutory requirements for informing parents and the wider public.