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Mr Lee Taylor
Head of School
The Telford Park School
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Dear Mr Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Telford Park School

Following my visit with Gwendoline Onyon, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 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 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 February 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.

Having considered all the evidence the academy may seek to appoint NQTs. This is subject to consultation with the academy's monitoring inspector.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the chair of the education advisory board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Telford and Wrekin. This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Chapman

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that every student is given the opportunity to make the progress they should and attain the standards they are capable of, by:
 - ensuring teachers use data about students' prior ability to plan learning that takes into account what students already know and can do
 - encouraging teaching that engages students' interest, challenges them to think hard and be less dependent upon adult support
 - ensuring that teacher assessment of students' work is accurate so that predictions can be relied upon
 - improving the quality of marking so that it helps students improve and take pride in their work
 - extending the focus on developing and promoting good literacy skills so that literacy becomes an integral part of teaching and learning in all subjects
 - developing the quality of teachers' questioning skills so that they are able to probe and stretch students' thinking and oral skills.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels, including governance. In particular:
 - ensure that processes for monitoring the quality of education (in terms of achievement, teaching and behaviour) are systematic, rigorous and effective, result in prompt identification of underperformance and urgent and effective actions to bring about improvement
 - ensure leaders model the high standards required of all staff, for example in terms of marking and dealing with behavioural issues
 - improve the curriculum, including the structure of the day, so that it engages students, makes them want to attend and do well and ensures that they develop work-related skills to prepare them for their adult lives
 - ensure that the quality of education provided for students who are removed from normal classes because their behavior is a concern and those students who are educated off-site for part of the week is of a quality that enables them to make at least the progress they are capable of

- ensure that governors have the skills to hold academy leaders to account and to take firm action when performance falls below that expected.
- Senior leaders must develop a culture of high expectations about all aspects of the education students receive so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- Improve behaviour and safety so that all students are given the opportunity to learn well and feel safe by:
 - introducing a clear and transparent behaviour policy that is consistently applied by all staff, including all leaders, and is linked clearly to improving learning
 - improving systems to record, monitor and evaluate attendance, lateness and behavioural incidents so that leaders and staff can identify quickly when and where problems arise and take urgent and effective action to bring about improvement
 - ensuring that all students feel safe in all areas of the academy
 - raising students' expectations of what is acceptable behaviour towards other students or staff.
- Improve students' achievement by ensuring that, from their starting points, all students, including the most-able students, disadvantaged students, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, make at least the progress they should. In addition:
 - ensure that students whose behaviour means they are removed from normal lessons and placed in small group or one-to-one provision, and students who are educated off-site for some of the week, learn well
 - improve the literacy skills of all students whose reading ages are below their chronological ages in order to ensure they can participate confidently in lessons in all subjects.
- 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 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 third monitoring inspection on 9 to 10 March

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with the executive head of school, deputy headteachers, other members of the senior leadership team and middle leaders. I also met with the chief executive officer of the Community Academies Trust, which is the academy sponsor. I was unable to meet with you during the inspection.

Inspectors spoke to pupils during break times and lunchtimes and in classrooms, and met formally with groups of pupils. Inspectors visited lessons and scrutinised academy documents, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and records of pupils' progress and attainment.

Context

Since my previous visit, a director of learning in English has joined the academy. The academy currently has three vacancies for three full-time members of staff in mathematics, science and food technology.

Three new members have joined the education advisory board, which is the governing body of the academy.

Outcomes for pupils

Considerable work has been undertaken to secure more robust, reliable assessment information for pupils in Key Stage 4. Leaders have ensured that this information has been carefully checked through processes operated within the academy, and by drawing from the expertise of other academies within the trust. As a result, leaders and the education advisory board have increasing confidence in this information, and leaders are better able to direct the right support needed to help pupils to catch up.

This information reveals that some positive improvements are expected in relation to the extremely poor performance of pupils who left last academic year. The progress and attainment of pupils on leaving in this academic year is forecast to rise to above the floor standards for the first time in a number of years. A greater proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are projected to make expected progress in English and mathematics. Areas of strength include pupils' achievements in music, drama and physical education.

However, current leaders and teachers are fighting against the legacy of long-term historic underachievement. Although pupils are generally experiencing better teaching than in the past that, coupled with an extensive range of support, is accelerating their progress, pupils' achievement on leaving Year 11 in many subjects is likely to remain below what it should be. Poor past curriculum choices have

compromised pupils' attainment in science and no pupils will secure the English Baccalaureate. Weak achievement is also expected in areas such as history, geography, French and areas of technology. The small number of pupils of higher ability are not on track to achieve the top grades that they are capable of in a number of subjects. This is because they have lacked the challenge over time that they have needed to reach them. Leaders are acutely aware of these issues and are undertaking a wide range of actions to remedy them as far is possible. Leaders have also wisely implemented systems and strategies to make sure that pupils lower down the school are kept on track. There is no doubt, however, that the work having to be done with Year 11 is a considerable draw on capacity.

Pupils are now benefiting from the introduction of programmes to promote reading. The academy has made a firm commitment to ensuring that pupils across Key Stage 3 are given the opportunity for regular reading in order to help them to develop their skills. Pupils who struggle with their reading are now accessing targeted support to help them to catch up. Inspectors observed the good progress pupils were making in their reading intervention sessions as a result of the skilful support of teaching assistants. Although this programme has only been in place for a relatively short period of time, there is clear evidence of its impact, with some pupils already making rapid gains in their reading ages. However, the baseline information that leaders now have in place has revealed the sheer extent of the challenge that leaders are facing – more than half of the pupils in the academy are below age-related expectations in their reading abilities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is demonstrating slow signs of improvement. Inspection evidence confirms leaders' views that their impact has not been what was hoped in this area. Leaders' monitoring information demonstrates that too much teaching is not good enough to raise standards with the urgency needed. Leaders have put in place suitably robust support and training for teachers to quicken the pace of improvements.

Where pupils' learning is stronger, it is characterised by positive relationships that encourage pupils' good attitudes to learning. Careful planning sets out clearly what pupils are expected to learn, and pupils are provided with challenging activities that engage their interests and make sure they build on their existing skills and understanding. Where this is the case, teachers ask probing questions to thoroughly check and extend pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson, the teacher skilfully used questioning and provided pupils with discussion opportunities so that pupils could share their existing understanding of mass and gravity. As a consequence, the teacher was able to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge in order that these could be tackled during the lesson. In addition, good progress was sustained because well-chosen media clips provoked pupils' enthusiasm and thought.

Increasingly, teachers are using whole-school strategies in their teaching routines. For example, many pupils find the time devoted to making improvements to their work in lessons helpful because they are able to tackle their weaknesses. Effective assessment routines in English are making sure that pupils know exactly what areas they need to work on in order to meet their target grades.

However, there is too much inconsistency within and across subjects. Where learning is weaker, teachers do not assess pupils' learning well enough to set tasks that build on what pupils already know and can do. As a result, the less able pupils struggle and other pupils can spend too long on tasks that are too easy. Some teachers move to new learning before ensuring that pupils have fully understood key concepts. This results in lesson time being wasted because the teacher has to repeatedly explain ideas again to individuals or groups of pupils as they go around the class, slowing the pace of learning.

Pupils testify to variations in the standards of teaching across the subjects they study. Nevertheless, many are very clear in their views that teaching in the academy is considerably better than it was in the past and that expectations of their learning are much greater.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Behaviour in lessons, though variable, is better. Improvements have been sustained since my previous visit. The 'consequences system' is understood clearly by pupils and provides teachers with the tools they need to manage any poor behaviour. Routines for starting and closing lessons have been established and help to focus pupils on learning, and promote orderly conduct in the corridors. Older pupils in particular describe significant improvements in pupils' behaviour in lessons and say that disruption is no longer a barrier to their learning. Pupils also value the rewards and praise they receive. However, low-level disruption and off-task chatter is sometimes not challenged quickly enough by teachers, resulting in slower progress in some classes. This is more evident in younger year groups, particularly boys, who can struggle to sustain concentration on tasks.

Around the academy site, pupils behave sensibly and move between lessons with efficiency. Pupils benefit from high levels of staff supervision, and, as a result, say they feel safe and that members of staff will help them if they have a problem. The introduction of a new pupil voice forum, known as the 'safe squad' is a recent innovation that leaders hope will provide a further means of pupils communicating any concerns in order that leaders can tackle these. Pupils are smartly dressed and respectful of their surroundings, ensuring that the canteen is litter-free following break times and lunch. A few pupils felt that they had insufficient time outdoors during breaktimes.

The number of fixed-term exclusions, which rose sharply towards the beginning of last academic year, is now reducing. This is because pupils increasingly understand, and are complying with, the academy's expectations. Nevertheless, there remains a small minority of pupils who continue to challenge standards.

Attendance remains stubbornly low and the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from the academy remains alarmingly high. Well-coordinated strategies are operating, and leaders are ensuring that attendance issues are followed up with tenacity. This relentlessness is resulting in incremental improvements. However, attendance continues to compromise too many pupils' continuity of learning and, consequently, their achievement.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The systems and processes that had been introduced at the time of my previous visit are now yielding a wealth of useful information that leaders use to evaluate the impact of their work. This information is documented well, for example in the detailed reports offered to education advisory board. Consequently, leaders now have a clear, accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy's performance and can articulate with clarity the next steps that need to be taken in the improvement journey. '100 day' improvement plans clearly set out leaders' next steps based on these evaluations.

Performance management procedures are a strength. These, coupled with information gathered through systematic checking of lessons and pupils' work, have now given leaders a thorough and diagnostic understanding of the quality of teaching in the academy. These processes have identified deficiencies in some teachers' skills. However, an important feature of these systems is the layers of support offered to help individual teachers to develop, and hold them to account for making improvements. Furthermore, the staff training programme has been adjusted in order to revisit and reinforce expectations. As a result, leaders are taking the right steps to address the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the academy. It is critical during my next visit that I see greater impact of this work.

Additional funding is now mobilised carefully in order to focus this spending on meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Well-considered strategies are now being operated to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, provide much-needed support to improve their behaviour and attendance, and make sure they transition successfully to the next phase of their education. Leaders' planning is now linked to sharply measureable targets so that the impact of this funding can be evaluated more sharply. This work is further benefiting from continued work with an external consultant.

Directors of learning have a robust understanding of the strengths and areas of improvement in their teams. These leaders are now focused on the critical need to

secure high standards of teaching in their teams, but the impact of this work is too uneven. Systematic scrutiny of pupil performance information is ensuring that leaders are taking a suitable range of well-coordinated actions to raise the achievement of pupils in their areas of responsibility. This team has been further strengthened by the additional of a director of learning in English.

Leaders continue to develop the effectiveness of safeguarding at the academy. The level one child protection training that was planned at the time of my previous visit has now taken place. 'Prevent' training is scheduled towards the end of this month. The education advisory board approved a new safeguarding policy in December. This is a detailed and comprehensive document that provides a robust framework for the workforce. Furthermore, additional training has been delivered to ensure that the deficiencies in some teachers' understanding of statutory documentation identified during the last inspection has been addressed. Staff spoken to during the inspection communicated a more thorough knowledge of this. Close communication with the local authority continues to ensure that good advice is sought and timely action secured to keep any pupils safe from harm. Plans are now in place to make sure that pupils have a greater awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism through the academy's personal development programme.

The leader who oversees provision for those pupils who have special educational needs or disability has worked diligently to review the register for these pupils. This has resulted in a considerable increase in the number of pupils in need of extra support. However, this now means that suitable support can be directed towards those pupils who need it. Closer monitoring of the quality of provision for these pupils in their lessons needs developing further; there are clear training needs for some staff in order to meet the needs of pupils through 'quality first teaching'.

The curriculum has continued to develop in order that pupils moving into Key Stage 4 receive a broad and balanced offer of academic and vocational subjects. Well-thought-out 'pathways' for pupils of different abilities enable pupils to undertake courses that suit their needs and aspirations. However, pupils currently in Year 11 remain bound by the poor choices made by former leaders. A new assessment at Key Stage 3 has now been introduced, based on proven models operated within other academies within the trust. This is in its early phases, and pupils demonstrate, as yet, a mixed understanding of their progression in their skills in some subject areas.

The education advisory board continues to perform its duties with rigour. Well-structured and increasingly detailed reporting from leaders is carefully scrutinised and robust challenge is offered to ensure that leaders are bringing about improvements with the urgency needed. The education advisory board plays a paramount role in ensuring that the academy improvement strategy is being implemented. New additions to this body have further strengthened the skills-set, bringing further educational expertise and expertise in finance.

External support

The network of academies across the Communities Academies Trust provides valuable support for leaders and teachers. Key systems adopted by the academy have drawn from successful examples used in other academies within the trust. Leaders benefit from ongoing support that is helping them to embed and facilitate the smooth operation of these systems and procedures. Vital work has been undertaken across the trust to secure the accuracy of the academy's assessment information. As a result, this information is increasingly trustworthy. A recently conducted peer review has provided a useful external check of leaders' progress and the quality of teaching across the academy. This has confirmed the accuracy of leaders' self-evaluation.