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15 July 2016

Mrs Karen Squire  
Principal  
Don Valley Academy and Performing Arts College  
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DN5 9DD

Dear Mrs Squire

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Don Valley Academy and Performing Arts College**

Following my visit with Lynne Selkirk and Jeremy Haigh, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 6 and 7 July 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2014**

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching to be at least good or better throughout the academy so that students' progress accelerates not only in English and mathematics but also in all other subjects, by ensuring that:
  - teachers use the information about students' capabilities to plan well-targeted activities that meet their individual needs and sets them appropriate challenges, especially for the most able
  - students' independence and self-reliance are developed so that they do not wait for teachers to provide help and advice
  - marking is done regularly, is of good quality, clearly understood by students and acted upon appropriately
  - teachers do not accept poorly presented and unfinished work
  - any inappropriate attitudes shown by students during and between lessons are challenged systematically and regularly
  - teaching assistants' skills are used effectively in lessons.
  
- Raise attainment in all subjects, including in the sixth form, ensuring that students of all different abilities make rapid and sustained progress.
  
- Embed securely the new systems and policies recently implemented so that leaders and managers at all levels take responsibility for bringing about improvements by:
  - making sure the monitoring of teaching is done regularly and evaluated appropriately so suitable support and challenge can be provided
  - using the findings of the academy's monitoring to set clear targets to be achieved so that initiatives can be checked to measure their impact on student progress
  - ensuring that students in all year groups understand the fundamentals of British values
  - holding middle leaders to account for the progress students make in their subjects and ensure that in turn middle leaders hold their staff to account
  - monitoring carefully students' attendance in the sixth-form.
  
- Ensure that governors access available training so that they are better able to use information about students to hold leaders and teachers to account for the standards in their areas of responsibility.

## **Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 July 2016**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal and other senior leaders, a number of teachers and groups of pupils. Inspectors also met with the chief executive officer and a director of the sponsor, School Partnership Trust Academies, and a member of the education advisory board. Inspectors observed 24 part-lessons and scrutinised pupils' books from a broad range of subjects. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour and the general ethos around the school at social times. Inspectors scrutinised records of checks made by leaders on the quality of teaching, records of behaviour and attendance and safeguarding information.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, a further restructure of teaching staff has taken place, in order to align staffing with the requirements of the new curriculum model, to be implemented from September 2016. The restructure has resulted in a number of redundancies and two teachers have already left the school. Some teachers have been appointed to vacant posts so that, from September, the school will be fully staffed. There are two vacant parent governor posts on the education advisory board.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Senior leaders and managers have continued to press forward with planned actions and have again responded positively to the priorities for improvement identified in the previous monitoring inspection. Although some key challenges remain, the school remains on track to be removed from special measures when it is next inspected.

The principal has begun to set out the strategic aims for the next phase of the school's development. These plans include: further developing line management arrangements; strengthening the role of middle leaders; engaging the community more actively and continuing to develop teaching and learning. Plans to ensure a smooth transfer to the new school building in November are in place. However, leaders have more work to do in order to fully utilise this opportunity to raise everyone's aspirations and expectations for the future.

The leadership of teaching is increasingly effective. Senior leaders have a detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and have effective systems in place to support and challenge, where standards need to improve. Time-limited support plans have been used effectively to help a number of teachers sharpen their practice, although leaders know there is still more to do. Most teachers are benefiting from an extensive training and development programme which provides good support to teachers and leaders at all levels. Subject specialist support from

within the trust continues to be utilised effectively. As a result, the quality of teaching continues to improve and inspection evidence indicates the school is on track to achieve better examination outcomes this summer.

The actions of leaders have improved standards of behaviour and the general ethos and climate for learning in the school is largely settled and purposeful. Leaders are currently taking steps to 'raise the bar' further. Their actions are widely supported by the majority of pupils, who now wear the uniform smartly and treat members of staff and each other courtesy.

Further steps have been taken to develop the skills of curriculum leaders and most are becoming more confident in holding their colleagues to account. Their checks on the quality of provision are now taking place more consistently, in line with the best practice in the school. The line management of curriculum leaders by senior leaders has also become more systematic, so that weaker performance is being tackled more robustly.

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

Although improving, the quality of teaching remains inconsistent. A minority of teachers still do not expect enough of pupils. They allow them to get away with completing too little work in lessons and accept weak responses to homework tasks. They also do not do enough to address some pupils' poor presentation or correct errors in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. In addition, some teachers do not expect pupils to develop their ideas verbally and are too willing to accept short answers to their questions.

Overall, however, more teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. More teachers now make effective use of assessment information and plan lessons that help pupils take the next steps from their different starting points. Lesson activities are increasingly engaging and capture the interest of most pupils. Teachers mark work regularly and some teachers are becoming adept at ensuring that pupils use their feedback constructively to improve their work.

Teachers have become more effective in managing behaviour and the school's policy is now consistently applied. Inspectors saw very few incidents of disruption to learning. Pupils confirm this is now typical. However, some pupils continue to lack the resilience and determination to sustain their effort when learning activities are less appealing, and settle for underdeveloped answers, below the standard of which they are capable.

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

The school continues to be calm and orderly. Very recently, school leaders have begun to implement a new trust-wide behaviour policy, which is raising expectations for behaviour and conduct further. The vast majority of pupils that inspectors spoke to welcomed the 'water-tight' clarity the new policy provides. Pupils told inspectors

that standards of behaviour had improved considerably over the last year and that it is now rare for learning to be disrupted. High levels of staff supervision ensure that pupils conduct themselves well at social times and during lesson changeovers so that lessons usually start promptly.

However, some pupils have continued to challenge the school's higher expectations for behaviour. The level of exclusions, although fluctuating from month to month, has remained high across the year. Figures for this year to date indicate the proportion of fixed-term exclusions from the school is significantly above the level seen nationally. Leaders have plans in place, to be introduced from the start of next term, to better support those pupils returning from exclusions, so that they are less likely to be excluded again.

The high level of fixed term exclusions, and the increasing prevalence of families taking holidays during term time, has adversely affected attendance this year. Overall attendance for this academic year is below the national average and the proportion of pupils that miss school regularly has increased. School leaders continue to use a wide range of strategies to promote good attendance. Nevertheless, leaders recognise they must do more to improve attendance, as current absence rates are undermining efforts to raise standards of achievement.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The school's assessment information continues to indicate that around half of pupils in the current Year 11 are on track to attain five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, in this summer's examinations.

In English, the proportion of pupils making expected progress or better from their different starting points is on track to match that seen nationally. However, the weaker teaching and significant disruption to staffing in the mathematics department in the past means rates of progress in the subject continue to lag behind that seen nationally. In particular, the proportions of both disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils that are on track to make expected or better progress remains below that seen nationally. Pupils told inspectors that the quality of mathematics teaching has improved this year and they now feel they have begun to catch up lost ground.

More widely, assessment information indicates pupils are on track to attain higher standards in GCSE examinations in a number of subjects this year, including Spanish, philosophy, history, geography, music and drama.

Teachers are becoming more confident in applying the relatively new assessment system adopted by the school. In addition, leaders have been more rigorous in checking the reliability of assessment information and ensuring it is analysed more thoroughly. This information indicates the proportion of pupils on track to make expected or better progress in English and mathematics has improved and is close to that seen nationally.

Assessment information in the sixth form indicates that learners are on course to make more progress and attain better outcomes on academic courses than they did last year. Outcomes on vocational courses are expected to remain strong.

### **External support**

Since February of this year, School Partnership Trust Academies has been led by a new chief executive officer. He has quickly implemented a number of changes that are having a positive impact on the school's development. More subject specialists have been employed, of which a number are working in the school to support the development of teaching across different subjects. Robust guidance has been provided in order to reshape the curriculum so that pupils will have more time to study subjects in greater depth. Representatives of the trust are increasingly visible in the school and have supported the launch of the new behaviour policy effectively.

School leaders also report that they are benefiting from more frequent training and more opportunities to learn from good practice in other academies within the trust.