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Mr P Patel
Principal
George Salter Academy
Davey Road
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Dear Mr Patel

Special measures monitoring inspection of George Salter Academy

Following my visit with Gwen Onyon, Ofsted Inspector, and Rob Bourdon-Pierre, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 September 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 that have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2016.

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.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I recommend that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection without first discussing the proposal with me.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim advisory board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sandwell. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2016

- As a matter of urgency, ensure all safeguarding policies and practices meet current government guidelines and statutory requirements.
- Improve safeguarding by:
 - securing effective leadership for safeguarding and pupils' welfare
 - providing training for all staff in safeguarding, child protection and the potential risks of radicalisation and extremism
 - ensuring that all staff know and understand the procedures to follow and who to go to when they have a concern about a pupil's well-being or safety
 - ensuring governors know and understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities as outlined in the latest version of the Department for Education's document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
 - making sure that pupils' non-attendance is always followed up swiftly, that very prompt action is taken when a pupil's whereabouts are not known, and that all actions are routinely and clearly recorded in line with the school's policy
 - making sure all pupils have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to avoid or deal with the potential risks and dangers associated with radicalisation, extremism, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and the carrying and use of offensive weapons.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - making sure leaders work with pace and urgency to bring about rapid improvements in safeguarding procedures
 - checking the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures, including those for following up non-attendance
 - making sure that the school complies with all statutory requirements
 - ensuring leaders and governors have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to carry out their roles and responsibilities efficiently and successfully
 - ensuring the academy sponsor and governors routinely and rigorously hold leaders to account for their actions
 - ensuring governors robustly evaluate the impact that the Year 7 catch-up funding is having on helping eligible pupils catch up with their classmates in English and mathematics
 - making sure the progress of pupils attending off-site courses is carefully tracked, checked and evaluated
 - ensuring all school leaders routinely analyse the information they have

about pupils' progress, behaviour and welfare in order to have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and to implement appropriate action plans.

- Improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment by:
 - making sure that lessons are appropriately paced and that all pupils are fully engaged in their learning, avoid disrupting the work of others and produce and present work that truly reflects their ability
 - making sure the most able pupils are challenged more consistently in all subjects so that they make better progress, particularly in mathematics.

An external review of governance, including the school's use of the Year 7 catch-up fund, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 September 2016

Evidence

The inspectors observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects across key stages 3, 4 and 5. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. Pupils also discussed their perceptions of the school with inspectors in three formal meetings. Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and at social times.

Meetings were held with the principal, a range of school leaders and other staff, and members of the interim advisory board (IAB), including the chair. Inspectors also consulted a representative of Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT), who sponsor the school, and the school's former executive interim principal. Views of parents were considered from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and through a telephone discussion with parents.

Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, including the school's statement of action and action plans, policies and analysis of pupils' attainment and progress. Additional documentation was scrutinised; for example, minutes of the IAB's meetings, the school's procedures to ensure pupils are kept safe, and checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Context

You have taken up the post of principal this term. You have replaced the two principals who shared leadership responsibility for the school following the departure of the principal who was in post when the March 2016 inspection took place. There have been recent changes and clarification of the roles and accountabilities of senior leaders, particularly in relation to safeguarding responsibilities. The IAB was appointed when the governing body was disbanded shortly after the previous inspection. The board monitors and evaluates the progress the school is making regarding the areas for improvement listed in the last inspection report. Some teachers and other staff left the school last term, but leaders have been able to successfully appoint replacements to all posts.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's leadership has acted quickly to address the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection regarding improving the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in the school. Safeguarding procedures now have high importance. There is clear ambition and determination from all staff to improve the ways in which the school ensures the safety of all its pupils quickly and sustainably.

Senior leadership has been strengthened by the appointment of the principal,

restructuring of the roles of senior leaders, the appointment of the IAB and by external support. Senior leaders have a clear sense of direction to bring about the required changes. This has been shared with, and is supported by, staff. Parents continue to be supportive of the work of the school, its leaders and teachers.

The statement of action prepared in response to the previous inspection was initially not fit for purpose. The sponsor has now made amendments to this statement. For example, clearly explaining arrangements as to how parents will be informed of the proposed actions as well as ascertaining and taking their views into account. As a result, the statement of action is now fit for purpose.

Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding policies reflect current government mandatory responsibilities and guidelines. For example, school policies now reflect the most up-to-date version of 'Keeping children safe in education' which was published in September 2016. School policies are now compliant with statutory requirements. Staff receive briefings regarding the content of these important documents. Leaders are confident that staff are compliant with the school's expectations, although there has not yet been the opportunity to fully demonstrate this.

Leaders have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to carry out their responsibilities efficiently and successfully through training, consultation and networking. For example, the school's designated safeguarding lead and the two deputies have participated in enhanced safeguarding training. Restructuring of leaders' roles and accountabilities has created additional capacity to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders demonstrate a detailed and comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues and have led the development of appropriate policies and systems for the school.

Staff have received training in many key aspects of safeguarding including child protection, the potential risks of radicalisation and extremism and child sexual exploitation. Steps are taken to ensure that new staff, or those who are working at the school on a temporary or short-term basis, receive information about safeguarding matters and procedures. Staff who spoke to inspectors said that training is engaging and useful. As a result, staff demonstrate a high level of awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities and are confident in understanding how to identify pupils potentially at risk. Staff securely understand school procedures, such as the process of referring concerns about a pupil to leaders. Teaching staff also identify how their recently gained knowledge has increased their confidence when educating pupils about key safeguarding messages.

Leaders have taken action to change the routines used to assess and monitor pupils' progress. These changes include a reduction in the number of assessment points during the year and more rigorous measures to ensure tests are marked consistently. There are clear expectations of how middle leaders will analyse assessment information and record their subsequent interventions for pupils in a uniform manner. It is yet to be demonstrated that these changes will improve the

value and quality of internal assessment information that they will collect this year.

A school-wide behaviour monitoring system has been introduced recently. The information that this system generates allows leaders to identify detailed patterns in positive and negative pupil conduct, for example in different year groups. The system is still in its infancy. There has been insufficient time to demonstrate how subsequent interventions are impacting on pupils' behaviour, or how consistently teachers use the system in the long term.

Members of the IAB have up-to-date and detailed knowledge and experience of safeguarding. They understand their key responsibilities for ensuring that pupils in the school are safe. The IAB receives regular, detailed information from school leaders and requests additional information when required. Key questions to leaders, and visits to the school, allow the IAB members to confirm the validity of the information they receive. The IAB supports, challenges, and holds school leaders to account for the actions they are taking. The board ensures that there is rapid, sustainable progress in relation to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, particularly those relating to safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders are focusing on developmental sessions for teachers to help make sure that pupils are engaged and challenged at an appropriate level and that lessons have appropriate pace. Teachers across the school welcome this training and development. They also appreciate opportunities to observe other teachers in lessons. Additional bespoke development closely matched to particular needs is provided for teachers, if required.

Pupils' engagement in their learning and their behaviour in lessons is of a good standard in almost all lessons. Teachers plan lessons with the pace and challenge that are appropriate for the pupils in their classes. As a result, high-quality learning takes place and pupils are able to demonstrate the progress they make during a lesson. Occasionally, teachers do not move pupils on to new or more challenging work when skills or learning have been mastered; this slows down pupils' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning in the large majority of lessons. They focus on the tasks set for them, although a few are not as responsive in class as they could be. Pupils are proud of their work and are willing to share their achievements and successes with visitors. Relationships between teachers and pupils and among pupils are constructive. Pupils spoke positively about the behaviour and conduct monitoring system which was introduced recently. They described how the rewards that the system offers are incentives to improve conduct and learning. The behaviour of pupils around the school site is calm and orderly, helped by high levels of supervision during social times. Pupils wear their uniform

smartly, and with pride.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations. They described the part the school's personal, social and health education programme plays in this, and how visitors to the school have provided them with key information. However, younger pupils are less familiar with the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism than other aspects of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know who to talk to at the school if they have concerns over their welfare or safety, or that of their peers.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced systematic, efficient and swift procedures to follow-up pupils' non-attendance. Prompt action is taken on the rare occasions that the whereabouts of a pupil are not known. Staff responsible for attendance now clearly record all the actions they take, and the senior leader responsible for safeguarding has started to regularly review this information and, over time, will be able to assess the impact of these actions on pupils' attendance.

Leaders have introduced methodical procedures to make sure that the attendance, behaviour and progress of pupils who attend off-site courses are monitored closely. School staff have performed health and safety audits of off-site provision to ensure that pupils who attend are kept safe. The small number of pupils who attend this provision benefit from improved engagement when at school, which reduces their risk of permanent exclusion.

Outcomes for pupils

School leaders ensured that during the summer term the most able pupils in Year 11 were able to follow timetables personal to their learning needs. For example, pupils spent additional time preparing for examinations in subjects they had ambitions to study in the future. Additionally, a number of targeted interventions were put in place for Year 11 pupils in mathematics. School leaders have carried out an initial analysis of outcomes for summer 2016. This analysis shows that the proportion of top GCSE grades achieved increased from the previous year, and provisionally indicates that the progress of the most able pupils will be higher than that of similar pupils nationally. The analysis also shows that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils looks to be slightly lower than that of other pupils nationally. In mathematics, leaders' early analysis indicates that the progress of the most able pupils in Year 11 at the school in summer 2016 was stronger than for the most able pupils nationally. Leaders will be able to validate their initial analysis once national data about progress is published later this year.

External support

An external safeguarding audit was very quickly commissioned following the previous inspection. This has proved to be a significant resource for informing leaders' action plans, and has contributed to the increased priority of safeguarding

at the school. The safeguarding action plan is regularly reviewed by school leaders, and success criteria rated for completion. However, some actions have been judged as completed even though it is too soon since their implementation to assess their impact and effectiveness.

A senior leader from OAT has been commissioned to support the school in response to the findings of the previous inspection. This effective external support is sharply focused on the school's safeguarding priorities. For example, frequent monitoring of leaders' actions and ensuring progress towards the objectives in the safeguarding action plan. The sponsor is successfully kept up to date with the school's progress towards the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection through this regular contact. As a result, the sponsor routinely holds leaders to account for their actions.

OAT is also supporting the school by deploying educational advisers to work with leaders regarding particular key priorities, such as the provision for the most able pupils in mathematics. Reports produced following visits to the school evaluate the school's current impact and clearly outline subsequent actions for leaders and educational advisers. The increased level of scrutiny and support by the school's sponsor is having a positive impact on addressing required actions.

An external review of governance, including the school's use of the Year 7 catch-up funding was recommended in the previous inspection report. The external review carried out in June 2016 only evaluated the effectiveness of the Year 7 catch-up funding. This was because the governing body was replaced by the IAB shortly after the previous inspection. Leaders are responding well to the eight recommendations made by that review. For example, bringing together all achievement information for pupils eligible for this funding to allow its impact to be evaluated more readily. Leaders expect to demonstrate more fully the impact of the review as actions taken embed during the course of this year. Members of the IAB regularly review the school's progress.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further develop newly established safeguarding systems to collect evidence that demonstrates their appropriateness for the school, and use this information to refine and improve their impact.