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7 November 2016

Mr C Weston
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Weston

Special measures monitoring inspection of Yewlands Academy

Following my visit with Marianne Young and David Pridding, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 18 and 19 October 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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.

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

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2015

- Rapidly improve the outcomes for pupils by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all areas of the academy in order to accelerate pupils' progress and increase standards by:
 - ensuring that teachers improve the behaviour of a few pupils in lessons through consistent and appropriate use of the academy's behaviour management systems so that pupils are allowed to learn at all times and are clear about expectations and routines
 - sharing the good practice that already exists within the academy to effect improvements in all teachers' abilities to raise standards and outcomes
 - ensure that teachers take full account of the current knowledge, skills and understanding of pupils when planning lessons so that all groups are challenged and stretched to do their very best at all times
 - insisting that teachers always provide work that inspires and engages all groups of pupils so that they are always interested and behave well
 - insisting that pupils always present their work to the highest standards
 - raising the expectations of teachers to ensure that they always believe that pupils are capable of more challenging work, particularly for the most able
 - ensuring that the gaps in both standards and the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs are urgently reduced so that they make the same progress as their peers nationally
 - accelerating the progress all groups of pupils make so that they achieve as well as their peers in other schools.
- Improve leadership and management so that they are able to effectively drive standards higher and accelerate the progress pupils make by:
 - creating a fully accurate appraisal of all areas of the academy through evaluation that can be used to develop an effective plan for school improvement with clear targets, timelines, responsibilities and accountability and ensure rapid progress for all pupils.
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels are able to be fully integrated into any plans for school improvement, know their roles well, are confident to be able to suggest ideas and know that they are contributing to the improvements for pupils
 - using the pupil premium funding effectively to reduce the gaps in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring that the interim executive committee fully challenges leaders at all levels and rigorously holds them to account to quickly reverse any declines in pupils' outcomes or standards of teaching, learning and assessment

- quickly developing governance so that it is robust and secure
- auditing and monitoring any support given to staff to ensure that it has an impact and improves standards quickly
- further increasing attendance and taking positive action to reduce persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs.

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 school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 October 2016 to 19 October 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, teaching staff and pupils. Meetings were also held with governors, including the chair of the governing body. A telephone discussion was held with a representative from Wakefield City Academy Trust.

Context

Following the previous monitoring visit, the trust seconded an associate deputy headteacher to the school's senior leadership team to support the development of teaching and learning. Governors were elected in June 2016 to form a new local governing board to replace the interim executive committee. The regional director of the trust chairs the governing body.

A senior leader, a middle leader and one teacher have been absent for some time due to ill-health. Leaders of science and modern foreign languages left the school in August 2016 and their leadership roles are being filled temporarily by other staff in the school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leadership team are working closely with the trust and are determined to improve the school. The headteacher has ensured that a management structure has been established. As a result, responsibilities are clearer and leaders are beginning to re-establish systems and procedures across the school's work. New systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are beginning to be implemented. Leaders are starting to analyse achievement data and information more thoroughly.

A strategy to improve the quality of teaching is now in place. Training for governors and staff has helped to develop their understanding of the school's priorities. Middle leaders welcome their roles in quality assuring the work of their departments. They know where stronger practice is emerging and where further challenge is required. However, leaders' evaluations are not linked closely enough to the impact teaching has on pupils' learning and progress. Consequently, good practice is not systematically identified and shared across subject teams to accelerate the progress that pupils make.

The revised action plan and combined statement of action produced by leaders and the trust provide clear and specific steps to address the areas for improvement from the previous section 5 inspection. The action plan is underpinned by subject plans in

English, mathematics and science. In all these plans, the link between actions and the difference they are intended to make to accelerate pupils' progress is weak.

Governors are enthusiastic. They ask questions and are starting to learn about the work taking place to improve teaching. However, the handover between the interim executive committee and the governing body is incomplete. Governors are not clear about the responsibilities delegated to them or those that are to remain with the trust. An external review of governance has not been undertaken despite this being an action in the school plan. A review of pupil premium funding has taken place but the resulting report is superficial. Consequently, it is not helpful in enabling leaders to revise their strategy and quickly improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Clearer guidance from leaders, together with a programme of training and support, are starting to raise teachers' expectations of pupils. Although inconsistencies remain within subjects, they are starting to diminish. Changes to the curriculum are beginning to make greater demands on pupils, particularly in science, humanities and mathematics. For example, a greater focus on problem solving is beginning to develop pupils' confidence and deeper understanding of mathematics.

Teachers are adopting similar strategies to plan and structure lessons. Most pupils in both key stages are engaged and responding well to the routine of initial tasks, followed by activities that are set at different levels of difficulty, and questioning or tests to check their understanding. In some classes, teachers make effective use of their assessments of pupils' understanding and skills to ensure that new tasks challenge pupils by extending and deepening learning, for example to cover new concepts or ensure that tasks are carefully pitched to tackle gaps in previous learning or aspects that pupils are unsure about in examination courses. Good practice in using assessments to inform planning is embryonic and developing slowly within departments and across the school.

Most-able pupils in key stage 4 welcomed the opportunity to select more demanding tasks and to stretch themselves in lessons. In some subjects, such as history, drama and health and social care, pupils are guided in their choice of task so that it is a step up from their previous work. However, this is not consistently checked well by all teachers. For example, many pupils, particularly in Year 7 and Year 8 classes, are unsure why they have selected a particular level of task, and some choose work that does not tax or challenge them. Consequently, the pace of pupils' learning and progress slows.

The presentation of pupils' work is improving, particularly in key stage 4 classes where very clear guidance is given in each subject and most pupils adhere to it. At times, teachers' expectations of pupils' writing and communication skills vary within and between subjects. For example, checks of Year 8 pupils' books showed that they responded to high expectations in English; they made notes independently and

interpreted information for themselves. In other subjects, the same group of pupils had few opportunities to develop their writing skills due to undemanding copying tasks which did little to extend their subject or literacy skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils feel that behaviour is improving due to actions leaders have taken to ensure smooth movement around the school and the changes they have introduced to lunchtime arrangements. The majority of pupils display interest in their work and follow instructions. More positive attitudes to learning are starting to emerge in Years 9 and 11 and attendance rates continue to improve. However, a lack of meaningful activity when pupils arrived in some classrooms resulted in lessons not always getting off to a crisp start. Some teachers are slow to check inattention, chatter or calling out at an early stage. Consequently, situations escalate and learning is interrupted. A small number of pupils present challenging behaviour and teachers' knowledge and skills in managing such behaviour are too variable. Leaders know where they need to focus their efforts to tackle behaviour for this group and reduce the high rates of exclusion. Recent work to develop strategies to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs is moving forward more speedily.

Outcomes for pupils

Examination results show that standards are rising from a low level and the proportion of Year 11 pupils gaining GCSEs at grades A* to C in English and mathematics rose sharply in 2016.

The school's assessment information shows an improvement in progress for all groups of pupils in English, science and humanities and more rapid progress in mathematics compared with the previous monitoring visit. However, very few pupils are currently making the rapid progress needed to overcome the legacy of poor teaching. Around half of the disadvantaged pupils are making the progress the school expects them to. Disadvantaged pupils' books show little difference in their rates of learning and progress compared with those of other groups.

The progress of the most able pupils varies; those in key stage 3 are making faster progress in English and mathematics than those in key stage 4. School data shows improvements in reading in most year groups as a result of regular reading sessions. The school's most able readers read fluently and with meaning. They are usefully drawing upon the results of school reading tests to identify appropriate reading books that are pitched to their needs.

Progress for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in Year 7 who need to catch up reflects the variability in teaching. More pupils are benefiting from the additional teaching sessions provided to individuals and small groups. These pupils quickly make up gaps in their learning and progress in

reading, communication and mathematics. However, they begin to lose ground when they return to their usual teaching sets and the school has yet to identify the reasons why.

External support

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the trust has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is suitably challenging and is integrated into a single school improvement plan. It sets out how the trust will work alongside the headteacher and governors until July 2017 to secure change and demonstrate improvement. The executive board has authorised the secondment of staff from the trust to the school to provide challenge and support for strategic leadership of the quality of teaching, and of governance. This is providing additional capacity to undertake this essential work. The impact of external support, particularly around training and assessment, is at an early stage but nonetheless it is helping to move the school forward swiftly.