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Miss A Mander
Acting Headteacher
Grange Technology College
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Dear Miss Mander

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grange Technology College

Following my visit with Fiona Dixon and Natasha Greenough, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 22 and 23 November 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 May 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 and the school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Hayter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and accelerates the rate of pupils' progress in all subjects by ensuring that teachers:
 - make effective use of assessment information to match tasks to the needs of different groups of pupils, including the most able, those who have special educational needs or disability and those who speak English as an additional language
 - ask questions that challenge pupils and deepen their thinking
 - provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and speaking skills in lessons, and particularly to write at greater length.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - sharpening development plans so they focus more on the specific impact of actions taken
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels more rigorously and systematically check the quality of teaching and provide teachers with helpful feedback
 - matching professional development activities more precisely to identified weaknesses in teachers' practice and checking that this results in improvements to teaching
 - making sure that all staff know who to go to if they have a concern about a pupil.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - ensuring that teaching stimulates and interests pupils so they are more fully engaged in learning
 - eliminating boisterous and aggressive behaviour at social times.
- Improve attendance by:
 - ensuring that school provides an enjoyable, relevant and interesting experience for pupils each day
 - reducing persistent absence.
- Improve 16 to 19 study programmes by:
 - ensuring that learners in key stage 4 are given the advice and guidance they need to make choices that match their planned next steps, and providing better careers guidance and support for university applications for sixth formers
 - improving the quality of teaching so that students make good progress in their chosen study programmes

- ensuring that all students achieve at least a GCSE grade C in both English and mathematics
- raising levels of attendance
- listening to the views of students and increasing their involvement in a relevant and fulfilling enrichment programme that better develops their life skills.

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 should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 22 November 2016 to 23 November 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of teachers at different stages of their careers, the chief executive officer (CEO) of Southfield Grange Trust, the interim chair of the board of trustees and three other trustees. Inspectors also met with pupils from each year group and talked with pupils during break and lunchtimes. Discussions were also held with sixth-form students.

Inspectors visited a range of lessons, jointly with senior and middle leaders. Leaders were observed giving feedback to teachers. A joint scrutiny of pupils' work was undertaken to assess the accuracy of leaders' judgements about pupils' progress over time and the effectiveness of their feedback to teachers.

An inspector visited PIPELINE, one of the three alternative provisions used by the school, and held discussions with pupils and staff.

During this first monitoring inspection, inspectors focused on the areas for improvement linked to leadership and management, pupils' behaviour and attendance and the effectiveness of 16 to 19 study programmes.

Context

Since the inspection in May 2016, there have been significant changes in staffing at all levels. The headteacher left in July and one deputy headteacher left in November. New governance arrangements are in place. The board of trustees is now the key group holding the chief executive to account for the performance of both schools in the multi-academy trust. The local governing body will provide a reference group for the trustees but will no longer have decision-making powers.

Several teachers have left the school since the last inspection report was published and more are due to leave at the end of this term. Appropriate replacements are being recruited. The acting headteacher anticipates a full complement of teachers will be in place by January 2017. Some new staff are starting before the end of term to provide a smoother transition for pupils.

Since 1 September 2016, the trust has been working in close partnership with Guiseley School in Leeds. The acting headteacher is seconded from Guiseley School and is supported by the executive headteacher from the same school. A contract is due to be agreed with Oldham Sixth Form College to formalise the existing support for the much-needed developments in the 16 to 19 study programmes.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, who was new in post in January 2016, and the academy trustees have shown a determined response to the inspection findings. Leaders quickly accepted their failure to ensure that good outcomes for pupils and, as a result, recognised that the arrangements for governance had to change and change quickly. The CEO has steered the process of separating out different governance roles and responsibilities. It is now clear who holds school leaders to account. Changes, informed by the external review of governance, ran in tandem to ensure that this crucial part of the process did not stall.

The new board of trustees met for their first working meeting during the inspection. They agreed a raft of plans, drafted and acted on since September, which are driving the school forward. They also accepted the recommendations of the pupil premium review but have not agreed a plan to address issues raised. They show a clear understanding of how they will hold the CEO to account for the work of the acting headteacher and senior leaders. This includes consulting with staff on a new structure for the leadership team to clarify leaders' roles and their responsibilities for each area requiring improvement. While this may lead to temporary disruption, the plan has a very strong rationale and creates clear lines of accountability, continuing the hard look at 'fitness for purpose' started by the trust at the highest level.

From the start of this term, the new acting headteacher has ramped up the pace of change. Work with senior and middle leaders is beginning to bear fruit. There is a growing understanding that leaders must make a clearly defined and positive impact on the progress pupils make, their behaviour, well-being and their attendance.

Overall, staff, including teachers, understand that previous ways of working failed pupils. Those staff who felt the inspection judgment was overly harsh cannot ignore the exceptionally poor results achieved by the pupils who finished Year 11 in July 2016. Sadly, some staff are still resisting necessary change, which is creating unhelpful turbulence and is a concern for pupils.

Following the publication of the last inspection report, parents and pupils raised concerns with leaders about the increased use of supply and cover staff. Leaders have been very open that the need for change has brought some instability in staffing. They now provide bi-weekly reports to parents about how often their child's lessons have been 'covered'. Pupils still report concerns about the lack of consistency this brings to their learning, especially in mathematics. Leaders are working tirelessly to ensure greater consistency in effective teachers assigned to classes.

Leaders have demonstrated through the introduction of new strategies and systems that they can be incisive in the delivery of higher expectations and greater ambition

for all groups of pupils. The majority of staff who talked to inspectors appreciate the tightly focused professional development opportunities that are now clearly linked to improving their practice. They also recognise that pupils' attitudes to learning are changing in response to the minimum expectations of teachers to follow prescribed routines at the start of every lesson.

Improving the accuracy of teacher's assessment of pupils work has been a key task for leaders and there is some evidence of improvement. However, the absence of a clear system for ensuring that teachers use all aspects of assessment to inform what happens in their lessons hampers leaders' ability to work out what is most effective in accelerating pupils' progress. It is crucial that this aspect of teachers' and leaders' work is clarified.

The leader assigned to improve careers advice and guidance has taken a systematic approach to working out the best way forward. Crucially, he has listened to pupils' and students' views and acted on them. Sixth-form students and Year 11 pupils feel very reassured by the support they are now getting to make key decisions about their futures.

Despite evidence that staff have received training in a range of child protection issues since September, some staff were not clear about how to report concerns about pupils. Leaders responded quickly and developed further methods of reminding staff about key reporting routes by publishing information about 'who is who' on the children protection team in all areas of school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching remains extremely variable. Some teachers' response to the inspection and changes in GCSE course requirements has been quite breath-taking in the positive impact it has had on pupils. Year 7 pupils' extended writing in design technology and the growing pride in their work is impressive. Unfortunately, this is not replicated, consistently, in other subjects or across all year groups.

Pupils say that teaching is improving, that teachers expect more of them and that there is more support if they need extra help, particularly in Year 11. However, work seen in pupils' books does not demonstrate that pupils are making the rapid progress needed for them to gain the ground they have lost over the last few years. Leaders are acutely aware of the distance to be travelled to improve the effectiveness of teaching. However, some leaders continue to focus too much on what teachers are doing rather than the impact of their teaching on pupils' gains in knowledge and understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils and staff report there has been significant improvement in pupils' behaviour both in lessons and when moving around the building. Staff have a greater

presence and provide clearer guidance to pupils on stairwells and corridors. Inspectors recognise that behaviour is less boisterous than previously described, however, it is clear that many pupils do not understand what behaviour is like in good schools. They accept being pushed and bumped into as a fact of life. Leaders recognise that more needs to be done to help pupils understand how to manage their behaviour calmly.

Work to address improvement in sixth-form students' attendance has had positive outcomes. The number of students who are frequently absent has dropped from 71 to 17 for the same period this year, when compared to last year. Attendance has risen by nearly 2%. However, renewed efforts to increase attendance in Years 7 to 11 have not had the desired effect.

Outcomes for pupils

In 2016, the results for Year 11 pupils were even worse than anticipated. In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils made more than a grade less progress than other pupils did in most schools. Progress in mathematics has not picked up. Leaders have put a raft of support plans and interventions in place but it is too early to see if these will improve pupils' success at GCSE in 2017. Trustees and leaders recognise they must secure even more extensive support to strengthen leadership and accelerate improvements in mathematics.

Other subjects are showing signs, for some class groups, of improving pupils' rates of progress. Everyone in the school is aware that progress must continue to accelerate if pupils are to catch up and achieve the outcomes they should.

External support

The support commissioned from Guiseley School is providing effective leadership and the arrangements with Oldham Sixth Form College are improving aspects of the 16 to 19 study programmes.