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Helena Brothwell
Principal (Director of Academy Designate)
Queen Elizabeth's Academy
Chesterfield Road South
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
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Dear Mrs Brothwell

Special measures monitoring inspection of Queen Elizabeth's Academy

Following my visit with Andrew Hunt, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 30 November and 1 December 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 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 school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the Diocese of Southwell, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise all pupils' achievement by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through:
 - ensuring that all teachers consistently use assessment information to plan activities which fully meet the needs of all groups and all learners
 - raising teachers' and pupils' expectations with regard to pupils completing more difficult tasks to stretch and challenge their understanding and secure more rapid progress
 - ensuring that there is a consistent focus on improving pupils' communication skills.
- Eradicate the gaps between the performance and attendance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers by:
 - evaluating the use of pupil premium funding and ensuring that strategies that do not secure rapid progress are adapted swiftly
 - raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils across all subjects and across all years so that they achieve at least the progress expected of them for their age
 - continuing to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and further reducing the proportions of those disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent.
- Further develop strategies to improve the attendance of all pupils across the academy and reduce the number of pupils who are regularly absent, so that attendance is at least in line with the national average.
- Further improve achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that the head of sixth form works closely with subject leaders to check the quality of teaching across all subjects, particularly the academic courses.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and pupils' performance in science, particularly in Key Stage 3 and in the core and additional sciences at Key Stage 4.
- Strengthen the capacity for leadership and management at all levels to accelerate improvements in what the academy offers its pupils by:
 - ensuring that the skills of all subject leaders, including those who are new, in monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are secure
 - ensuring that all teachers mark books in line with the academy's assessment policy
 - ensuring that teachers' performance targets focus sharply on improving the achievement of all pupils
 - ensuring pupils are provided with opportunities to reflect on the diversity of British society to prepare them for life in modern Britain
 - ensuring that government funding to improve the numeracy of the least-able pupils in Year 7 is used effectively to secure rapid improvement of these pupils' skills

- ensuring that the support from the School Partnership Trust Academies is timely and sustained to allow senior leaders' initiatives for improvement to become fully embedded
- improving engagement with parents to ensure all leaders understand parents' views and involve them more in supporting their children's learning and increasing their progress.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 30 November 2016 to 1 December 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed 23 parts of lessons, including tutor time. They met with the principal, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and representatives of the current sponsor, including the chief executive officer. Inspectors met with subject leaders of key subjects and leaders of teaching, behaviour and the sixth form. Inspectors spoke with pupils formally in a meeting and informally during lessons. Inspectors scrutinised a range of the school's documents, including the school's action plan, self-evaluation document, pupils' behaviour logs, achievement information, external reviews and monitoring records of teaching.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, the previous principal has resigned his post. A new principal has been appointed, with the title of director of academy designate. The school has successfully negotiated their sponsorship to a new trust, Diverse Academies Learning Partnership, from 1 September 2016. The new sponsors have appointed an executive principal to the school. A new vice-principal has been appointed. Fourteen members of the teaching staff have left the school. The head of humanities and the head of science have resigned since September. The chair of the governing body has resigned and the previous vice-chair has become the new chair.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

New leaders and managers have undertaken an in-depth review of the school's strengths and weaknesses and made some fundamental changes to the systems and structures of the school. These have included a change to the curriculum for pupils at both key stages 3 and 4, including rewriting the school timetable to include more creative subjects for pupils and improving staff performance management systems. The principal and the executive principal have worked very well together to deliver clear and unequivocal messages about the school's aims and ambitions. These have been met very positively by staff, most of whom are supportive of the new leadership and direction of the school. Work to engage parents with the school is showing early signs of success, with more parents than before attending parent consultation evenings and other school events.

The school action plan, called the 'academy transformation plan' (ATP), is well thought out and, among other things, has appropriately addressed the major structural weaknesses in the school, such as the school finances and the organisation of staff. These actions require further work, however, to fully and more specifically address each area for improvement from the previous section 5

inspection. These actions particularly refer to the ones pertaining to disadvantaged and the most able pupils. The assistant principal in charge of pupils' outcomes has, however, produced a well-thought-out plan to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, which remains a priority for the school. The plan is based on a secure evaluation of previous strategies and a sharper focus on individual pupils' needs, as well as closer monitoring of their progress. The plans also address the recommendations from the external review which took place last year. They are likely, therefore, to be more successful than in previous years. Leaders meet regularly to review the progress of these pupils.

New leaders have placed high importance on developing teaching so that pupils of all abilities and needs make the progress they should. Weekly continuous professional development sessions focus on improving teachers' understanding of what makes a successful lesson. Teachers' sharper focus on the progress of all groups of pupils is improving lesson planning. Inspectors noted increased consistency among teachers, both in the way lessons are structured and how teachers give feedback to pupils. Both aspects of teaching have improved since the last monitoring visit. Those teachers requiring additional support to improve their teaching are provided with bespoke coaching and training. The systems to manage teachers' performance have been strengthened and are now more coherent than before.

Subject leaders are improving their leadership and management skills because of increased training. They demonstrate a greater understanding of their responsibilities to both monitor and develop their team. They are receptive to advice and guidance and value the opportunities provided by the new sponsors to visit other schools and work with other practitioners. Subject leaders, especially in mathematics and English, have developed their curriculum areas appropriately to meet the challenges of the new GCSEs. They recognise that pupils in key stage 3 still lack the knowledge and skills they should have to make good progress at key stage 4. Work with primary schools has increased. Subject leaders are improving their knowledge of what pupils' prior attainment at key stage 2 actually means. The teaching of practical and vocational subjects, such as health and social care, art and sport, remains a strong and successful feature of the school.

The new systems to manage pupils' behaviour are much clearer and more coherent than previously. The new vice-principal is leading the implementation of the new systems well. Both staff and pupils agree that the systems are helping to manage behaviour more effectively. The proportion of rewards given to pupils to recognise their good behaviour is now higher than the sanctions for poor behaviour. Leaders know that some teachers are not always following the policy correctly but they are helping those teachers to manage behaviour more effectively.

The school is without a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). The principal is leading this area. The previous poor provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has led to a lack of effective support

and, consequently, poor outcomes for these pupils. The principal is liaising with specialist professionals to address each registered pupil's needs more effectively. New strategies have been introduced to improve pupils' numeracy skills in Year 7, such as 'mathletics'. However, it is too early to see the impact of these measures. A new recruitment drive to employ a suitable SENCo for the school is underway.

Leaders have developed the provision for post-16 students. The new partnership with Hucknall Sixth Form Centre has provided students with a wider range of courses to follow. The sixth-form leader is improving the way students' progress and the quality of teaching are monitored. Students enjoy their courses and say they are supported well by their teachers.

The local governing body has undergone considerable change to its membership as a result of the new sponsorship of the school since the last inspection, although there remain some vacancies. These changes represent a considerable challenge for the school in ensuring that there are sufficient knowledge and skills among the membership to be able to hold leaders to account effectively. Nevertheless, governors have carried out their duties well so far in challenging leaders where there is underperformance. Governors are improving their understanding of the new performance measures, which is helping them interpret the published school achievement information. They have valued the greater responsibilities and confidence afforded to them by the new sponsors to properly govern the school at a local level.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The designated safeguarding leaders have implemented effective systems to support, report and record pupils' concerns. Their records show that child protection referrals are made in a timely fashion and follow-up support is provided effectively. Both staff and pupils are vigilant to potential risks to pupils' safety. The curriculum is improving and pupils are developing their understanding of how to keep safe, especially online. Bullying incidents are rare, although pupils say that in the past their concerns around these matters have not always been dealt with well. Leaders recognise this and they are increasing awareness and support systems to eradicate bullying across the school.

The school leaders are now providing more opportunities for pupils to be better informed about current affairs and other religions and cultures. The recent reintroduction of religious education lessons, and assemblies and society lessons are improving pupils' understanding of Britain's diverse society.

The actions taken so far by senior leaders, including the school sponsors, represent an important turning point in the school's journey towards the removal of special measures. While it is too early to see the impact of many of the measures taken so far, the plans represent a clear understanding of the priorities of the school. While more work is needed to secure the trust of pupils who have been let down by the school in many ways, the positivity among staff is palpable.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is improving, although there remain too many areas where teaching is inadequate. The quality of teaching at key stage 4, in both English and mathematics, is better than at key stage 3. There are now significant pockets of good and outstanding teaching across the school. In all the key subjects, however, teaching is inconsistent. Where teaching and learning are successful, the teacher and pupils have a strong positive relationship. Also, the teacher uses the 'class data' sheets effectively to plan for different pupils' needs. The resources are stimulating and motivate pupils to want to learn more. Teaching is also characterised by high expectations, where pupils show an eagerness to tackle more complex work.

The quality of teaching in science is improving but still represents a significant concern, as pupils' achievement remains poor. Work in pupils' books shows that the work set is not always appropriately challenging or checked and in some books there is little progress in knowledge and skills. Pupils' behaviour across science lessons is not consistently good.

Pupils say, and the pupils' workbooks confirm, the new approach to teachers' feedback is making a difference to pupils' progress, where it is carried out according to the school policy.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' work remain a concern for the school. Last year's predictions of pupils' examination results by teachers were inaccurate for most subjects. The school's current assessment systems are not clear or well understood by both teachers and pupils. Leaders are currently working with the family of schools in the trust to develop a more coherent system to assess pupils, especially at key stage 3.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Parents, staff and pupils say that behaviour is not as good as it should be, although staff acknowledge it is improving in comparison to last year. Some pupils are regularly disruptive in lessons or get sent out of lessons for persistently refusing to stick to the school behaviour rules. The new behaviour rules have caused a spike in the number of pupils temporarily excluded from the school, as some of them have found it difficult to adjust to the new expectations. Some pupils are regularly sent to the inclusion centre when they have reached the most serious sanction. A minority continue to be repeat offenders. On occasions, these behavioural incidents are exacerbated by teachers' lack of skills in managing different pupils' needs and using appropriate de-escalating strategies.

Of serious concern is the continuing poor attendance at the school by pupils. In particular, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are disproportionately represented in absence figures. The poor attendance of these pupils to the school is having a direct impact on their progress.

Leaders have stepped up their strategies to engage with hard-to-reach parents and they have provided more resources to persuade pupils that coming to school is important to their future. The new attendance team monitors the attendance of key pupils regularly, with some early signs of positive impact.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' outcomes in the 2016 summer examinations were disappointing. The results did not live up to the expectations of previous leaders. Key groups, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the most able and boys, continue to underachieve. The gap between vulnerable groups and other pupils nationally is widening. The unvalidated progress scores for 2016 suggest the school is once again at or below floor standards (the minimum expectations set by the government at the end of key stage 4). The overall outcomes in 12 out of 14 subjects were below national averages.

Currently, pupils continue to underachieve across a range of subjects, especially in key subjects such as mathematics, English, science and humanities. Pupils' achievement in science, including core and additional science, continues to be significantly below national averages. Pupils' overall progress, currently, is still poor across both key stages. The strategies employed recently by teachers to accelerate pupils' progress may be too late to ensure that current Year 11 pupils achieve the results they should by the summer of 2017, but they should ensure better progress for other pupils in other year groups. Pupils in key stage 3 continue to need consistently better-quality teaching across a range of subjects, so that they can make the progress they should at GCSE.

In the sixth form, most students are set to make the progress they should, especially in vocational subjects such as health and social care and business studies, which are a strength in the main school as well. Students' achievement in the retake of their mathematics and English GCSE is positive; most achieve at least a grade higher than their grade in Year 11.

External support

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the new trust has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose. Parents are kept informed of the progress the school is making and leaders plan to seek their views regularly. The ATP is a significant improvement from the previous plan submitted by the sponsor's predecessor. The executive principal is committed to modifying the ATP further to ensure a sharper focus on the key areas for development for vulnerable groups. Appropriately, the local governing body is now part of the plan to monitor the work of leaders.

The new sponsor has made a convincing start to support the school. It has brought much-needed clarity to the direction and expectations of the school. It has worked

sensitively with staff to gain their confidence. The links it has with other good or better schools provide a good opportunity for teachers to learn from best practice. The executive principal is on site to support the new principal at least two days per week. The sponsor has also provided specialist advisory support to both the English and mathematics leaders. The sponsor's training and development programme, including teachers' access to the 'teachers' toolkit', a catalogue of the latest research in teaching and learning and network meetings, represents a significant opportunity for teachers to develop their practice. The full school review, which took place in November, provided a useful evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The principal is using the recommendations from this review to develop the school's action plan further.

The trust board understands the need to ensure that their central policies are kept up to date, comply with statutory government guidance and are relevant to the school.