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31 January 2017

Mr Qamar Riaz  
Headteacher  
West Walsall E-ACT Academy  
Primley Avenue  
Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS2 9UA

Dear Mr Riaz

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of West Walsall E-ACT Academy**

Following my visit with Peter Wilkes, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 January 2017, 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 and the school's improvement plan are fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint four newly qualified teachers, one each to the English, mathematics, science and humanities departments.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards by:
  - raising expectations of teachers to ensure that they believe pupils are capable of more-challenging work
  - taking full account of pupils' current knowledge, skills and understanding when planning lessons so that all groups of pupils are challenged to do and achieve their best
  - collecting accurate information about the progress of pupils in key stage 3
  - developing pupils' resilience and confidence, especially in key stage 3
  - accurately identifying and meeting the learning needs of pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and disadvantaged pupils, so that they make at least good progress
  - continuing to improve achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that learners make sufficient progress in lessons, particularly in academic courses.
- Improve the behaviour of pupils by:
  - eliminating low-level disruption through consistent implementation of the academy's behaviour management systems so that pupils are clear about expectations and are not prevented from learning
  - developing systematic and coherent structures for the analysis of pupils' behaviour so that it can be monitored over time and the effectiveness of strategies to improve behaviour can be fully evaluated
  - further developing strategies to improve the attendance of those disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs or disability who are regularly absent.
- Improve leadership and management so that they have a sustained impact on pupils' outcomes, by making sure that leaders:
  - tackle the remaining weak teaching within the academy
  - ensure that all middle leaders, including those who are new, have appropriate expertise in monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and check that these skills are being used effectively to improve outcomes
  - ensure that the academy is fully staffed with suitably qualified teachers
  - ensure that the academy's curriculum provides pupils, particularly those in

- key stage 3, with more opportunities to prepare for life in modern Britain
- quickly develop a clear and effective role for academy ambassadors within the new governance arrangements of the academy.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 18 January to 19 January 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including the self-evaluation document, development plans and information on current pupils' progress. Inspectors met with you, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers new to the school and to teaching, representatives from E-ACT, the school's sponsor, and the school's 'ambassadorial advisory group' (AAG). Inspectors spoke formally and informally to pupils about their learning, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors observed the behaviour and conduct of pupils as they arrived at the school at breaktimes, lunchtimes and in lessons. The views of parents were noted from the 45 responses to the school's own questionnaire to parents and the 11 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The views of staff were considered from the 35 responses to the school's own questionnaire to staff. Inspectors observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. Inspectors completed an extensive scrutiny of pupils' books across a range of subjects. Additional documentation was analysed, including information about the quality of learning, teaching and assessment, arrangements to ensure pupils' safety and the checks on staff's suitability to work with children.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the teaching and leadership teams. Trustees appointed you as the substantive headteacher in April 2016. A large majority of the staff are new to the school. You have restructured the curriculum, leadership team and the academic and pastoral support pupils receive. For example, you have created four 'small schools' called Austen, Bronte, Shakespeare and Tolkien. E-ACT has restructured school governance. The regional education director is the governance representative of the board of trustees and chairs the raising attainment board meetings. The AAG has no decision-making powers.

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

You acted swiftly and effectively to address many of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection in March 2016. For example, the staff team is almost complete, and most of the teachers are subject specialists. You are employing two long-term supply teachers in mathematics and science. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that there are fewer staff changes, and they greatly appreciate the consistency to the quality of teaching this brings.

You and your leadership team have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have incorporated the findings of your own analysis

and the findings from the previous inspection into a well-focused and appropriate improvement plan. The plan includes precise success criteria and outcomes, which are promoting improvement effectively. The plan is clear and appropriately identifies lines of accountability and the processes by which you will monitor, evaluate and review school performance.

You have provided suitable training for leaders new to the school or new to leadership. Leaders who spoke with inspectors said that this training has helped them to understand better their roles and responsibilities and the wealth of information that the school has on pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance. The extended leadership team are using the information they have to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection and those that you have identified. However, the impact of this work, while seen in improving pupils' behaviour, is yet to be seen in improving pupils' academic performance.

Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly since the previous inspection. You have introduced a behaviour policy and systems that are simple, clear and understood by pupils and their parents and staff. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they fully understand the behaviour policy and the school's expectations. They were clear that pupils' behaviour has improved as a result and that pupils' inappropriate behaviour disrupts fewer lessons. Inspectors saw staff applying the policy consistently and with minimum disruption to pupils' learning. The 'small school' leaders are beginning to use their analysis of behaviour incidents and pupils' attendance to put in place suitable interventions and support for vulnerable pupils and to evaluate the impact of their actions.

Leaders with responsibility for learning, teaching and assessment are working successfully to make sure that teachers and teaching assistants understand and implement the new teaching model and marking policy effectively. Through this, teachers plan lessons to support learning and to make sure pupils have a greater understanding of what they are learning. The work in pupils' books shows that the majority of teachers are setting work that meets pupils' needs and their current level of knowledge and understanding. However, you rightly recognise that many of the pupils have significant gaps in their learning and that this is inhibiting their progress. The majority of this improvement work has focused on making sure that staff apply the learning and teaching model consistently and provide feedback to pupils in line with the marking and assessment policy. As a result, it is too early to see significant and sustained improvements in pupils' outcomes.

The recently appointed literacy leader has a thorough understanding of what she and other staff need to do to improve pupils' literacy skills. She has begun to put in place a range of suitable strategies to improve key stage 3 and 4 pupils' reading, writing and speaking skills. She is using a range of information, such as pupils' reading ages, to measure pupils' progress from relevant starting points. However, she correctly recognises that these strategies are yet to have a significant impact.

You and other senior leaders are holding middle leaders, including subject leaders, and teachers to account for pupils' progress. Staff have a secure understanding of which individual pupils and groups of pupils are underperforming. As a result, the large majority of staff are taking swift action to make sure that pupils are beginning to make at least expected progress from their end of key stage 2 starting points.

E-ACT's new governance and accountability structure provides frequent and rigorous challenge to school leaders. The regional education director has a firm understanding of the school's journey and of the progress it is making. The trust uses the half-termly raising attainment board (RAB) meetings effectively, to review progress and to set appropriate and challenging improvement targets. A small minority of members of the AAG are still unclear about their roles and responsibilities. The trustees are aware of this, and have appropriate plans in place to make the role of the AAG clearer.

The arrangements to keep pupils safe are a strength of the school. Staff have completed extensive child protection training and are clear and knowledgeable about their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. As a result, staff are vigilant, caring and proactive in identifying pupils or families that are potentially or actually at risk. The designated safeguarding leader has forged positive relationships with a host of outside agencies in order support pupils and their families more effectively. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in the school as staff are approachable and are always willing to listen and to help. The checks on staff's suitability to work with children are thorough and comprehensive. For example, members of interview panels have completed safer recruitment training and always check any gaps in interviewees' education or employment history.

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

Improvements to the quality of learning, teaching and assessment are evident. For example, the previous inspection highlighted that teachers should take full account of pupils' current knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, have worked effectively to make sure that teachers understand and use the information they have about pupils' abilities to plan lessons that meet pupils' needs and gaps in knowledge. Pupils are making better progress as a result. Pupils told inspectors that you have reduced the number of supply teachers and changes to the staff team. They added that there has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching in most subjects. However, while the work in pupils' books shows that teaching is improving, the quality of pupils' work remains variable.

Leaders expect teachers to have higher expectations and greater ambition for individual pupils and groups of pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils. The vast majority of staff are rising to this challenge, and leaders are supporting the very few teachers who are struggling to make sure that pupils do well. The majority of staff, including those new to

teaching, who spoke to inspectors, value the useful and focused training they receive that they say is improving their practice. They also recognise that pupils' positive attitudes to learning and improved behaviour are enabling pupils to make better progress.

Through the 'do now, I do, we do, you do' learning and teaching strategy, teachers are becoming more skilful at using questions to check and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Where teaching is most effective, teachers quickly address pupils' mistakes and misconceptions, so that they are more able to try more challenging and difficult work.

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

Pupils' behaviour in and out of lessons has significantly improved since the previous inspection. You have introduced a simple and clear behaviour policy, which the vast majority of staff are implementing effectively and pupils understand. As a result, the numbers of fixed-term exclusions and inappropriate behaviour incidents have reduced considerably. Pupils who spoke with inspectors unanimously agreed that pupils' behaviour has improved and that there are now fewer incidents of low-level disruption in class.

You described the atmosphere in the school at the time of the previous inspection as 'toxic'. During this inspection, the atmosphere in the school was calm, relaxed and purposeful. The vast majority of pupils were polite, courteous and helpful. Teachers who spoke with inspectors said that there has been a major improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning and that pupils' outcomes are improving as a result. Inspectors agree.

The work in the majority of pupils' books shows that they take their learning seriously and want to do well. Pupils in key stage 3 complete their work, and an increasing number show that they have the confidence and resilience to try more challenging and difficult work.

Pupils' attendance is improving and is broadly in line with national figures. You and your staff have worked effectively to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these groups of pupils have similar attendance to other pupils in the school. You rightly recognise that almost all of the pupils who are not doing well have poor attendance. You have put in place suitable actions to address this. However, it is too early to see any significant and sustained improvements.

The majority of pupils have a secure understanding of British values and of how to keep safe in a range of situations. Pupils demonstrate an understanding and acceptance of others' differences. They work cooperatively and listen to and respect the views of others. Pupil and staff's positive and productive relationships are a strength in and out of the classroom and make a valuable contribution to pupils'



improving behaviour and outcomes. Pupils in key stage 3 and 4 and students in Year 13 who spoke with inspectors said that the careers information, advice and guidance they receive helps them to think about and plan for the next steps in their employment, education and training. A significant number of pupils told inspectors that their career aspirations have been raised since you arrived at the school.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Leaders recognise that there is a lot of work to do to ensure the best outcomes for pupils in key stages 3 and 4. Leaders at all levels, and staff, are working together to achieve this aim. Everyone in the school is aware that progress must continue to accelerate if pupils are to catch up and achieve the outcomes they should. The unvalidated information for pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 4 shows that pupils did not do well in English, mathematics and a range of EBacc and other subjects, for example humanities. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils in a range of subjects and lower- and middle-ability boys in English.

Pupils currently are now doing better as a result of the improved quality of teaching they receive. However, many pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding as a result of the legacy of ineffective teaching. You rightly identify that pupils' low literacy levels are a significant barrier to pupils making rapid progress. You have put schemes in place to help improve pupils' reading, writing and communication skills, but it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Information provided by the school shows that an increased proportion of pupils in key stage 4 and students in Year 13 are on track to reach their targets. However, in Year 9, the vast majority of pupils are not doing well across all subjects and are underachieving considerably. You have rightly prioritised your attention and resources on this issue.

### **External support**

You and your staff draw effectively on a range of support and training from external sources. For example, the support provided by the trust is effective and is beginning to have an impact. The trust's systems to monitor, evaluate and review the school's actions are frequent, robust and detailed. The trust rigorously holds leaders to account for pupils' progress in the area for which they have responsibility.

You have brokered effective support from Tudor Grange Academy, Solihull. Staff who spoke with inspectors said that they have found the training and support provided by the staff from Tudor Grange to be helpful and supportive.

The improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' behaviour and attendance show that the trust's support, and that from other agencies, is beginning to bear fruit.