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Mr Robert Gladwin and Mrs Katrina Kerry
Acting Principals
The Manor Academy
Park Hall Road
Mansfield Woodhouse
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
NG19 8QA

Dear Mr Gladwin and Mrs Kerry

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Manor Academy

Following my visit with Kim Bower and Christopher Stevens, Ofsted inspectors, to your school on 21–22 March 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 previous monitoring inspection.

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

As behaviour is not inadequate at the academy, I no longer recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers. You judge, however, that the school is not yet in a position to appoint newly qualified teachers in science or modern foreign languages.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive of the Two Counties Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of

children's services for Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise academic achievements and progress in all subject areas, especially mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils catch up rapidly and that the most able pupils attain the highest results
 - ensuring that all teachers use information about pupils' starting points to plan effective learning for all pupils, and especially for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - improve further the accuracy of assessment to enable precise identification of those pupils who are not making sufficient progress and provide them with learning appropriate for their needs.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by building on the strongest practice in the school, and ensuring that all teachers:
 - deepen pupils' understanding effectively by planning learning that engages and challenges different groups of pupils, including the most able pupils
 - support and challenge disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make at least the progress expected of them
 - support all pupils to be more self-confident and articulate learners, especially older boys.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders at all levels have an accurate view of the school's performance and plan strategically for its sustained improvement
 - senior leaders prioritise developments in a timely and appropriate way to bring about rapid improvements in curriculum provision, teaching, learning and assessment
 - all subject and other middle leaders build their capacity to monitor and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within their subjects and across the school, resulting in improved outcomes for all pupils
 - the directors of the school challenge leaders more stringently, and hold them to account for the strategic improvement of the school.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 21 March 2017 to 22 March 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting principals, governors, including the chair of the governing body, and the chief executive of the trust. They also met briefly with the substantive headteacher. Inspectors met with a range of other senior and middle leaders and teachers. Meetings were held with different groups of pupils, including sixth-form students, and inspectors also spoke with pupils in lessons. Inspectors observed teaching in a wide range of lessons. Some of the teaching was observed jointly with a senior leader from the school. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including records of pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour, and attendance. They also considered documents covering the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the records kept on bullying.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, two teachers of modern foreign languages and an English teacher have left the school. Seven members of staff are currently on maternity leave. This includes the substantive principal who is scheduled to return to work before the end of the spring term. At the time of the monitoring visit, the school was in the process of recruiting a new head of the science department.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The two acting principals have continued to secure improvements at the school while the principal has been on maternity leave. With good support from the trust, they have made considerable changes to the school's curriculum to remedy the previous weaknesses which were inhibiting pupils' achievement. As a result of these changes, the pupils in Year 7 now receive separate lessons in each of the national curriculum subjects rather than in the cross-curricular 'pods' that were used previously. The acting principals, with support from the trust, quickly secured the support of governors to make this major change and, having done so, immediately reorganised the timetable so that the new curriculum could be implemented at the start of the spring term. All of the pupils in Year 7 who spoke with inspectors said how much they prefer learning in these lessons now. They reported that lessons are more interesting, more challenging and less repetitive. The pupils in Year 8 who had previously learned in this way also told inspectors they thought this was a change for the better. Some said how they had felt they had a lot of catching up to do when they started having lessons in separate subjects in Year 8. While it is early days, this change is beginning to reap dividends, as pupils' achievement in Year 7 is improving. It is also enabling leaders to have a better grip on how well pupils are learning in each of the national curriculum subjects.

Leaders have continued to make robust use of the school's performance management arrangements to tackle the weakest teaching. Staff who are not meeting the standards expected of them continue to receive a package of support through additional training and coaching. There are clear examples where this approach has proved to be effective in improving teachers' practice. Where teaching does not improve sufficiently, leaders take firm action. This tough approach has resulted in some of the weakest teachers leaving the school.

The acting principals have also taken on board the findings from the previous monitoring visit that, when evaluating teaching, they did not pay enough attention to the quality of teaching delivered by temporary staff. This meant that their judgements were too generous and did not reflect pupils' learning experiences well enough. The acting principals have increased the frequency with which they monitor lessons delivered by temporary staff and imposed the same high expectations of teaching quality that they have for permanent staff. Temporary teachers who need to improve their practice now receive the same additional training and coaching as the school provides for other staff. Leaders now make regular checks on the quality of cover work provided by absent staff to make sure it is good enough.

Leaders' evaluations of teaching are increasingly guided by a sharp analysis of pupils' views. Leaders have thoroughly scrutinised the surveys completed by pupils about the quality of teaching and learning to help them to identify where further improvements are needed. Plans are in place, for example, to provide training for staff in response to the views of lower-attaining pupils that the ends of their lessons do not consolidate well enough the learning they have done that day.

The pace of improvement, however, continues to be undermined by staffing difficulties in science and modern foreign languages. The school remains understaffed in these areas and is too dependent on supply staff. Leaders are doing everything possible to lessen the impact of gaps in staffing through checking the quality of teaching and learning, providing training where it is needed and reorganising the curriculum to ensure that pupils in Year 11 are least affected in preparation for their exams. Nevertheless, the school's ongoing inability to recruit high-quality science and languages teachers remains a key barrier to improvement. The long-term absence of the head of science means that the school does not currently have the capacity to develop science-specific aspects of teaching.

The governing body continues to provide appropriate oversight of the school's work, including through monitoring the work of senior leaders at first hand. Governors are fully aware of the problems caused by staffing difficulties and ensure that leaders are doing all they can to lessen their impact. The governing body is strengthening relationships with parents through the 'parents' forum' and has implemented changes in response to parents' views. It also makes sure governors receive regular information about the impact of the support provided to staff whose teaching needs to improve. Governors also seek the views of pupils to ensure that the changes being made are having a positive effect. They make regular checks on how well the

needs of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are being met, as well as the needs of pupils in Year 7 who need help to catch up. They do not, however, check closely enough that the different spending decisions made by leaders to support disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are having a positive impact.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The regular checks carried out by senior and middle leaders show that teaching continues to improve overall, though it still varies too much, especially in science and modern foreign languages. The improvements to teaching in English and mathematics reported at the last monitoring inspection have been maintained. Staff are providing the necessary support to new teachers to ensure that the pace of improvement in these two subjects is sustained. Most pupils take pride in their work and demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to learning in these subjects. Teachers are skilled in planning activities that meet individual needs well and ensure that all pupils are involved in their learning, for example by closely checking their understanding and ensuring that all are involved in question and answer sessions. In the lessons visited, the teachers were skilled in pushing pupils to think hard in mathematics and challenged them to explain their answers to ensure that their understanding was secure. In discussions with a group of the most able pupils in Years 8 to 10, the pupils reported that they enjoy mathematics because they are regularly challenged to think hard. One, typifying the views of others, reported that 'they don't make it easy for us'.

Teaching has also improved in the social sciences, including in subjects where standards in the sixth form were previously weak, for example in psychology and sociology. Teaching in science remains inconsistent but some of the teaching is highly effective. For example, lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 were challenged very effectively to plot their graphs accurately. They were enthused and engaged because of the teacher's high expectations, the good level of challenge provided and because of the teacher's imaginative use of 'The Simpsons' to stimulate their interest in the task. The teacher also retained a sharp focus on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills during the lesson. Strong teaching was also seen in sixth-form lessons in chemistry and biology. Nevertheless, too many pupils continue to experience teaching in science that is not strong enough to make up for their previous underachievement.

During the inspection, strong teaching and good-quality work was seen in other subjects, such as physical education, art and history. The sixth-form students who met with inspectors spoke very positively about the quality of teaching they receive overall, though, like other pupils, they remain concerned about the lack of consistency of teaching in science.

Scrutinies of pupils' work show that differences between the quality of work produced by disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers are diminishing. On the

whole, teachers are ensuring that they complete work to the same standard as their peers and that they receive the good-quality marking and feedback that is set out in the school's assessment policy.

The scrutiny of the work of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and of lower-attaining pupils revealed, however, that not all teachers manage their learning well enough. These pupils' books showed that teachers do not always insist on pupils applying the school's high expectations of the presentation of their work. As a result, their books sometimes include untidy or unfinished work. While mathematics teaching is generally strong, teachers do not always ensure that lower-attaining pupils set out their work accurately, using pencils and rulers for diagrams or spacing their calculations carefully enough. Where pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported by additional staff, including by teaching staff who give up their time to support other classes, they make stronger progress. The school is rightly planning to increase the number of teaching assistants to ensure that support is provided more consistently for the pupils that most need it.

Overall, where pupils are taught by permanent staff who are in school regularly, they generally learn well. The weaknesses in teaching are mostly linked to staff absence and the school's inability to recruit high-quality science and modern foreign language teachers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

In most of the lessons observed, pupils behaved and learned well. Where teaching is strong, pupils' behaviour is excellent. Where it is weaker, pupils tend to become distracted, sometimes resorting to shouting out, chatting or simply not getting on with their work.

Pupils reported that behaviour is good in most of their lessons but that it still varies considerably, especially in modern foreign languages and science. The inspectors' visits to lessons confirmed pupils' views to be accurate. Behaviour remains too dependent on the quality of teaching the pupils receive.

Leaders have strengthened their checks on bullying by ensuring that reported incidents of bullying are followed up more systematically to make sure that the bullying has stopped. Pupils report that bullying does take place sometimes but that mostly it is dealt with effectively by staff.

The school has strengthened its provision for pupils who find it difficult to behave well in lessons. A new manager has been appointed to the former 'Altex unit' and this provision has been relaunched as an 'inclusion unit'. She has raised expectations of pupils' behaviour in the unit and ensures that they work productively. Pupils who attend the unit now receive teaching which is highly tailored to their individual needs, including lessons designed to help them to

overcome difficulties in managing their own behaviour. This provision is proving to be increasingly effective in reducing the number of incidents of poor behaviour. The improved teaching now in place, the higher expectations imposed by teachers and the extended school day for pupils who have behaved poorly have resulted in a 60% reduction in the proportion of pupils who have been sent to the unit on more than one occasion.

The recent restructuring of the pastoral system is also beginning to have an impact on pupils' behaviour and attendance. The appointment of three heads of year since the last monitoring inspection is increasing the school's capacity to support pupils who do not attend or behave well enough. There have been some gains in attendance but the changes are too recent to ensure that all groups of pupils attend regularly. Leaders know that attendance in Year 10, and for some disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is too low. Plans are in place to appoint heads of year in all year groups for September 2017.

Provision for enrichment in the sixth form is limited. Although sixth-form students engage in community service in or beyond school, they have too few other opportunities for enrichment. Sixth-form students told inspectors they were disappointed by the limited range of opportunities provided to enhance their personal development and their enjoyment of the sixth form. The information, advice and guidance provided to them about possible career routes are not delivered early enough in the year to be sufficiently useful. Some students in Year 12 expressed frustration that they have yet to receive the necessary guidance, tailored to their interests and abilities, to help them identify what they might do when they leave school.

During the inspection, inspectors identified weaknesses in the school's systems to ensure that sixth-form students sign in and out of school appropriately. This weakness has now been remedied.

Outcomes for pupils

The work in pupils' books and the better teaching observed suggest that the improvements in achievement in English and mathematics reported at the last monitoring inspection are being sustained. Leaders are rightly cautious, however, in their forecasts of pupils' GCSE examination grades in English and mathematics, given that these subjects will be examined under new arrangements this year following national changes to assessment arrangements.

Strong teaching is enabling pupils in Year 7 who joined the school without achieving the expected standard in English and/or mathematics by the end of Year 6 to catch up quickly. Leaders have analysed closely pupils' attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 6 to identify the specific weaknesses in their knowledge, skills and understanding that need to be remedied. As a result, over two thirds of these pupils have caught up in English and half have caught up in mathematics.

While achievement in science remains varied, pupils' attainment in their individual skills assignments has risen as a result of additional teaching. The school's current information shows that too many pupils are currently working below their challenging targets even though their attainment is higher than in previous years. Standards in modern foreign languages remain low.

Leaders are ensuring that the progress of disadvantaged pupils who are at risk of falling behind is monitored carefully. Middle and senior leaders meet every fortnight to identify the underachieving disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 so that additional support can be provided. These meetings enable leaders to review the impact of this support regularly to make sure it is working. While this is a relatively new strategy, the records of these meetings show that they are beginning to make a difference.

The special educational needs coordinator closely monitors the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including gathering these pupils' views about their learning. Strategies to improve the reading skills of pupils who need extra help to gain access to the full curriculum are proving to be effective. Differences in achievement between pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and other pupils are diminishing overall. In a few subjects, they do not receive the support and challenge they need to fulfil their potential.

External support

The school continues to benefit from good-quality support from the trust. The chief executive officer of the trust works very effectively with the two acting principals and the governors to ensure that the changes being introduced are well thought through and are implemented effectively.

The school continues to benefit from the expertise of headteachers from other schools in the trust, including the chief executive. These leaders are using their experience of successful school leadership to remedy some of the key weaknesses which have previously undermined the quality of education experienced by pupils. They have brought a common-sense approach to bringing about improvements to the school, for example by supporting the simplification of the curriculum in Year 7. They have recently worked with leaders and governors to devise a new leadership structure, to be implemented from September 2017. This is designed to bring greater clarity to roles and responsibilities, to increase the school's capacity to drive up the quality of teaching and strengthen pupils' personal development.

The trust has provided good support in subjects where teaching has been weaker, for example in modern foreign languages, but has not had the capacity to provide the support the school needs to improve the quality of teaching and learning in science.