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Mr C Weston
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Dear Mr Weston

Special measures monitoring inspection of Yewlands Academy

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 June 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 fourth 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.

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 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 school 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 school'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 school 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 with 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 school 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 pupil outcomes or standards of teaching, learning and assessment

- ② quickly developing governance so that it is robust and secure
- ② auditing and monitoring any support given to staff to ensure that it has an impact and improves standards quickly
- ② further increasing attendance and taking positive action to reduce persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 6 to 7 June 2017

Evidence

During the inspection I observed teaching and learning in lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and staff about their work. Some of the observations and scrutiny of pupils' work were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were also held with the headteacher, senior leaders and staff. I also met with governors, including the chair of governors. I held a telephone conversation with the chief executive of the Wakefield City Academy Trust (WCAT), and I met with a representative of the trust.

Context

An assistant headteacher has returned from illness and a small number of teachers have returned following long-term absences. Temporary teachers and a few non-qualified teachers continue to cover for absent staff or vacant posts. An associate deputy headteacher seconded by the trust to the school's senior leadership team has left the school in the last week. Eighteen staff are leaving at the end of term, including the headteacher and a deputy headteacher.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and managers are more purposefully tackling the areas for improvement since the last monitoring visit. Attendance is improving and the quality of teaching is starting to have a stronger impact on pupils learning in both key stages. Senior leaders are analysing information and tracking pupils' performance more comprehensively and confidently. Leaders are beginning to make better use of this information to identify when pupils' progress stalls and are starting to take action where pupils underachieve. Following analysis of the school's latest performance information, leaders lost no time in taking action. They ensured that heads of department and pastoral staff worked together to put in place tailored programmes to support the most able pupils in Year 10. However, it is too early to see the difference that these very recent actions have made.

The headteacher and governors have made headway on longer term plans to fill staff vacancies and they are taking firmer action to reduce staff absence levels. Specialists have been appointed to fill English and mathematics vacancies for September and a new deputy headteacher is also due to take up his post. However, uncertainty regarding the trust's plans for the leadership of the school from September is starting to deflect leaders' and governors' attention at a critical time in the school's development.

Subject leaders now play a more important role in making improvements to teaching and pupils' progress. Teaching is improving, particularly in languages, music, and science. Regular checks on the quality of teaching take place in all

subjects but the findings of these checks are not always used well enough by senior and middle leaders to have a substantial impact on pupils' progress. Consequently, many pupils still experience daily variation to teaching and this in turn affects their enthusiasm for learning.

The headteacher has not ensured that a credible programme and plan has been shared fully or agreed with governors or the trust following the second external review of the use of the pupil premium funding. The school has continued with what they have done over the last two years. Spending, mainly on staff and training, has yet to secure the step change in disadvantaged pupils' attainment, progress and other outcomes that the school intended. Leaders have not pursued this aspect of the school's work thoroughly or speedily. Governors have been slow to hold leaders to account.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving and some is very effective. Where this is the case, teachers make sure that tasks are interesting and challenging. Teachers use what they know about pupils' prior learning to make sure that tasks build on previous knowledge or tackle common misunderstandings so that pupils learn more rapidly. This has a good impact on pupils' engagement in their learning and they work productively and with obvious enjoyment. Teaching in languages typifies these qualities and there are examples of the same in a number of other subjects including computing, history, mathematics, science and music.

Some teachers structure lessons well, have strong subject knowledge and manage behaviour well. As a result, pupils learn quickly and effectively. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, all of these aspects were demonstrated. The teacher managed behaviour firmly, insisting pupils listen as she skilfully demonstrated a method of calculation, checking they were following and understood through her questioning. Pupils were interested and confident to try for themselves and quickly extended their calculation skills in using a range of variables of speed, distance and time to build up a secure understanding of compound measures. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils understand well enough and gaps in understanding and knowledge go unchecked. In key stage 4, gaps in pupils' knowledge in mathematics and in other subjects are starting to emerge and teachers are tackling them as they arise.

Leaders have recognised and focused more firmly over the last two terms on developing pupils' skills in using language. Actions to tackle the low level of literacy skills and pupils' confidence in using language was evident in most of the lessons observed. Teachers focus on pupils knowing and understanding how to use the right terminology to explain the features of their work in a number of subjects. Pupils are quick to recall specialist terminology when asked to by teachers, although confidence in using language is slower to develop. Across most subjects in Year 10, pupils are also taught to organise their writing, to group and organise facts and to

convey their ideas. Opportunities to tackle questions on past exam papers is helping some pupils to develop confidence and be less anxious about examinations in the future.

Some teachers, new to the school or less experienced than others, find the standardised curriculum in key stage 3 that the school has adopted from the trust to be restrictive. In several lessons observed during this inspection, work given to pupils was not adapted enough to meet their needs. For example, Year 8 pupils struggled to make sense of the intricacies of plots and relationships between characters in texts in English. Elsewhere, Year 8 pupils collected facts but had too little grasp of history to use them meaningfully. In lessons, pupils quickly lost their initial interest and teachers worked hard to explain and model answers. Books examined in lessons showed that practise using past GCSE exam papers and use of standard assessment questions had little benefit for some pupils who struggled to read and fully understand the questions. Guidance and support from senior leaders and subject leaders has not been clear enough to teachers to address these concerns.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

In almost all classes, pupils line up quietly on entry to lessons and most arrive equipped to work. Better preparation by teachers is ensuring a smoother start to lessons and almost all pupils settle well to tasks. Some teachers deal very effectively with inattention and talking and individual pupils quickly desist in response to the warning they are given. However, expectations of behaviour for learning are not consistent across the school and low-level disruption persists. Poor behaviour by a small number of pupils is proving challenging and exclusions have risen quickly over the term. With the assistance of external agencies some pupils are responding to support. However, training, support and strategies to enable staff to deal with such poor behaviour have been slower to develop.

More pupils are now attending school and are punctual to lessons. A greater focus on the importance of regular attendance and concerted work by leaders and pastoral staff since the last monitoring visit has helped to reduce high rates of persistent absence. Leaders are fully aware of the need to sustain further improvement throughout the school year.

Since the last inspection, the school has developed further support groups for vulnerable pupils. Pupils are more confident and are aware of how to keep themselves safe.

Outcomes for pupils

School data and information show improvements in progress since the last inspection. Most groups of pupils continue to make progress towards the targets leaders set earlier in the year in all curriculum subjects. Targets are set at levels

which, if achieved, represent good progress and indicate leaders' ambitions for all pupils. As at the last inspection, pupils continue to make steady rather than rapid progress in English and mathematics.

Crucially, Year 11 pupils' progress remains mixed and similar to 2016. Additional teaching and intensive revision sessions have continued to be well attended since the last monitoring visit. Success is mixed in other year groups too. Year 10 pupils are making swifter progress than other groups and they remain generally very positive about their courses, the quality of teaching and the support they receive. Most pupils in Year 7 and Year 9 are generally on track and making the progress leaders expect at this stage. Progress overall is slower in Year 8. Checks on pupils' work undertaken during the inspection found that pupils were not always given work that stretched and challenged them appropriately. This was particularly evident in English where pupils' skills in selecting and using text were weak. In lessons, pupils were dependent on teachers to furnish them with alternative phrases and explain what they meant. Most-able pupils also struggled to make links and convey ideas or find the right selections in the books they had read to illustrate their writing.

The mixed success also extends to the most able pupils, some of whom are not making the progress they are capable of and are not on track to meet their targets in mathematics and English. In some cases, the absence of key staff has had a negative effect on the pupils in the top sets in mathematics. Checks on pupils' work found a marked contrast in pupils' confidence in English and especially in using emotive language compared to the confidence of their writing in other subjects.

On the other hand, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making stronger progress in English, mathematics and science.

Gaps between disadvantaged pupils' progress and that of other groups are starting to narrow. However, the latest data also indicates gaps remain in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their fellow classmates in mathematics, science, history and geography. This is something that the school has yet to investigate. Governors are now taking a greater interest in the performance of pupils and have convened an extraordinary meeting to explore this issue further.

External support

Initial support from the trust in adopting curriculum resources and schemes of work, and approaches to monitoring and evaluating the school's work, have proved helpful. However, they have not been adapted and tailored to the changing needs of pupils. Although school leaders have carried out monitoring activities using the format and training provided by the trust, they have not focused enough on quickening pupils' learning and progress. Since the previous monitoring visit, communication between the school and the trust has fractured. Key information about the budget has not been passed to governors in a timely way to aid their

decision-making. Even so, individual school improvement partners have enabled the school to secure assessment systems and to confidently assess and track pupils' progress.