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29 June 2017

Mrs Denise Burrows  
Acting Headteacher  
Ernesford Grange Community Academy  
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Coventry  
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Dear Mrs Burrows

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Ernesford Grange Community Academy**

Following my visit with Patrick Amieli, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 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 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 December 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 is fit for purpose.

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve leadership and governance by ensuring that:
  - governors have the skills and understanding to hold school leaders to account for the school's performance
  - the curriculum at key stage 4 promotes all pupils' progress
  - teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are reliable
  - pupil premium funding has a positive impact on the attendance, progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils
  - literacy and numeracy catch-up funding has a positive impact on those pupils in Year 7 who need to improve their basic skills
  - leaders evaluate training for teachers in terms of its impact on pupils' progress
  - provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures good progress
  - pastoral middle leaders become more effective at improving attendance.
- Improve attendance across Years 7 to 11 by:
  - carefully evaluating the impact of the school's strategies for the improvement of attendance to determine which strategies are effective and which are not
  - challenging and supporting parents of pupils with high levels of absence to ensure that their child's attendance improves.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and middle-ability pupils make good progress by ensuring that teachers:
  - use assessment and other information to plan activities that are well matched to pupils' needs
  - plan lessons across all subjects that develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills
  - deploy teaching assistants so that their impact is consistently positive on pupils' progress
  - consistently tackle poor behaviour so that learning is not disrupted.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 20 June 2017 to 21 June 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors assessed the impact of leaders' actions taken since the last inspection, with particular focus on the areas for improvement relating to leadership and management, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare and outcomes.

Meetings were held with the executive principal, the acting headteacher, other leaders and a group of staff. The lead inspector met with two members of the interim executive board, including the chair, who are also trustees. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone.

There have been no additional responses to the Parent View questionnaire since the last inspection but the opinions of parents were considered through the views of a small number of parents who have contacted Ofsted about the school.

A meeting was held with a group of pupils, and inspectors also spoke to pupils informally and observed behaviour during social time and in lessons. Inspectors made short visits to 25 lessons, jointly with leaders, across different subjects and year groups. During these visits, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. Inspectors also examined the work in a sample of pupils' books.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including improvement plans and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety was also analysed.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes to the leadership structure of the school. An assistant headteacher left in December 2016 and another relinquished the leadership role in February 2017. A third assistant headteacher and two middle leaders are due to leave in August 2017. In addition, six middle leaders have left the school since the last inspection and a new head of humanities and a special educational needs coordinator joined in April 2017. Two new assistant headteachers have also taken up post and a deputy headteacher will start in September 2017. An internally promoted head of mathematics will also take up post in September 2017.

Since the last inspection, a teacher and four supply teachers have also left the school and another teacher is due to leave in August 2017. Seven new teachers have joined the school and four more have been appointed for September 2017. In addition, six other members of staff have left and a new pastoral leader has joined

the school. A second pastoral leader is due to start in September 2017.

The chair of the interim executive board (IEB) assumed that position in March 2017 and the acting headteacher has had her contract extended until August 2018. Plans are in place to appoint a substantive headteacher for September 2018.

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

Leaders and managers are beginning to change the culture of the school by raising expectations of what the pupils can achieve. The executive principal and acting headteacher have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are building capacity to drive improvement throughout the school.

Middle leadership is developing and new senior leaders, such as the assistant headteacher with responsibility for inclusion, are taking effective action to improve the school. However, new leaders and systems need time to embed in order to secure the rapid and sustained improvements that the school requires.

The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is developing. The assistant headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator have a clear understanding of what must improve and they have prioritised their action in order to meet the immediate needs of the pupils. Assessments have taken place, the curriculum has been adapted, learning support assistants have been more effectively deployed and education, health and care plans have been issued. These plans have been produced in consultation with young people, parents and relevant professionals in order to meet the needs of the pupils.

However, the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not leading to good progress. The new systematic process for identifying special educational needs is not yet embedded; progress, attendance and exclusion information is not analysed thoroughly in order to inform action and teaching staff do not routinely use the information that is available to them in order to plan to help pupils make rapid progress. Informed interventions are not in place and provision, which has evolved over time, such as the 'learning centres' and the 'Base', has not had a detailed review in order to determine whether it meets the needs of current pupils.

The recommended review of the use of pupil premium was timely and school leaders are taking action to address the issues that were highlighted in the report. The leadership of this aspect of the school's work has changed; there is a 'pupil premium champion' in place and the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making is monitored more thoroughly. However, teachers do not routinely use the information that is now available to them to plan to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and new systems are not fully developed. Consequently, there is little evidence of impact at this point. The progress, attainment and attendance of

disadvantaged pupils still lags behind that of other pupils nationally.

The review of governance also took place soon after the last inspection. Members of the trust and the IEB responded positively and decisively to the recommendations and those responsible for governance are offering appropriate support and challenge to leaders. Members of the IEB know the school's strengths and weaknesses as they receive information from a range of sources about the school's performance. They undertake regular focused school visits and they have taken responsibility for evaluating actions to address specific parts of the school's improvement plans. As they have relevant skills, knowledge and experience, those responsible for governance are holding school leaders to close account.

The curriculum has been changed to ensure that pupils receive sufficient learning time for the subjects that they are studying. However, plans are in place to develop this further in order to ensure that the curriculum is more flexible, personalised and relevant. Currently, it does not promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and it is not leading to good progress for all pupils.

Targeted training for staff is now in place. It has focused upon improving aspects of teaching and is linked to the management of staff performance. Staff are set targets linked to pupil progress and teacher training is evaluated in terms of how it impacts on pupils' progress. However, the performance management process and staff training are not yet leading to consistently strong teaching or rapidly improving progress.

Safeguarding is effective. This aspect of the school's work is well led and managed and clear procedures are followed. Parental concerns are responded to appropriately but leaders are aware that they need to work more closely with some parents to increase their engagement with the school.

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

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. As a result of effective coaching and the fact that staff are held to close account for the progress pupils make, there is evidence of improvement but too much poor practice remains.

Learning activities are not consistently well planned for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Staff do not routinely use the information that they are given about individual pupils to inform their planning. Consequently, activities do not meet the needs of pupils with different starting points. This slows down the progress that pupils make. Expectations are often not high enough and pupils are not always clear about what they need to do in order to perform well.

However, where learning is well planned to meet the needs of pupils with different starting points, teachers are able to use their good subject knowledge, enthusiasm, probing questions and positive relationships to help pupils make good progress. This

is particularly evident in sixth-form lessons where these characteristics lead to high levels of engagement. Post-16 students are given opportunities to take responsibility for their learning that younger pupils are often denied.

Learning support assistants are more effectively deployed than at the time of the last inspection but their impact on pupils' progress varies. Interventions and support are not always well informed. For example, the impact of catch-up funding has not been carefully tracked so staff are unclear about which activities are making the most difference to the progress that pupils make.

Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum are not routinely identified so they are rarely taken. As a result of issues associated with leadership and staffing, the promotion of key literacy skills is underdeveloped. Staff do not insist on full verbal responses to questions to promote good communication and high-quality writing and regular reading opportunities are not evident in a range of subjects.

Timetabled literacy lessons and literacy input in tutor times have not improved progress in reading, writing and communication. Staff have not been held to close enough account for the progress that pupils make in these sessions and clear links have not been made with the use of catch-up, pupil premium and special educational needs and/or disabilities funding. Leaders have recognised that there has not been a holistic overview to developing literacy over time so changes to the leadership of this crucial aspect of the school's work are now in place.

Tutor time is not used productively to promote learning. Pupils do not value what they are given to do and staff are not held to close enough account for what they deliver. Consequently, time is wasted. Leaders plan to address the ineffective use of tutor time through the changes to the pastoral system that are planned for September 2017.

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

Attendance has improved slightly and the persistent absence of some pupils has declined. This is the result of careful evaluation of the school's strategies to improve attendance and effective support and challenge of parents of pupils who do not attend regularly. The trust's education welfare officer has had a marked impact on improving the attendance of individuals and pastoral leaders are now held to closer account for improving attendance. However, as attendance is still below the national average, leaders plan to take further action to ensure that all groups of pupils attend school regularly.

Punctuality to school and to lessons has improved but pupils do not return swiftly to class after breaktime. Attitudes to learning are improving and learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. However, pupils are not consistently challenged to stop talking when the teacher is talking. As staff and pupils do not have high

enough expectations of presentation, it is often poor. This indicates a lack of pride in the work that is being undertaken.

Beyond the school council, there are few opportunities for pupils to influence or lead developments in the school. The promotion of personal development and welfare is not embedded across the curriculum or in tutor time.

Pupils feel safe and they reported that the school is a 'friendlier place'. The pupils who spoke to inspectors had no concerns about bullying and stated that behaviour was improving. There was some boisterous behaviour during social time but pupils trust staff to resolve any problems that they face.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Assessment is more accurate, with stronger practice in English and mathematics. Standards are checked across the school, within the trust and beyond so leaders are confident that staff predictions will give a more accurate picture of this summer's outcomes. However, although progress is improving, current pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make the rapid progress required to make up for gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding.

### **External support**

As commented on the last inspection report, Sidney Stringer multi-academy trust offers effective support to the school. The trust has significantly increased the leadership capacity in the school by providing senior and middle leaders to Ernesford Grange Community Academy. They have also provided members of the IEB, additional staffing, resources, support and training. Trust-wide systems are used in the school and information technology, maintenance and human resources services are provided by the trust. All of this input is helping to improve the school.