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Ms Alison Mander
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Mander

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grange Technology College

Following my visit with Dimitris Spiliotis, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Steven Beverley, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 4 July 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 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.

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 board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Hayter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and accelerates the rate of pupils' progress in all subjects by ensuring that teachers:
 - make effective use of assessment information to match tasks to the needs of different groups of pupils, including the most able, those who have special educational needs or disability and those who speak English as an additional language
 - ask questions that challenge pupils and deepen their thinking
 - provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and speaking skills in lessons, and particularly to write at greater length.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - sharpening development plans so they focus more on the specific impact of actions taken
 - ensuring leaders at all levels more rigorously and systematically check the quality of teaching and provide teachers with helpful feedback
 - matching professional development activities more precisely to identified weaknesses in teachers' practice and checking that this results in improvements to teaching
 - making sure that all staff know who to go to if they have a concern about a pupil.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - ensuring teaching stimulates and interests pupils so they are more fully engaged in learning
 - eliminating boisterous and aggressive behaviour at social times.
- Improve attendance by:
 - ensuring school provides an enjoyable, relevant and interesting experience for pupils each day
 - reducing persistent absence.
- Improve 16 to 19 study programmes by:
 - ensuring students in key stage 4 are given the advice and guidance they need to make choices that match their planned next steps, and providing better careers guidance and support for university applications for sixth formers
 - improving the quality of teaching so that students make good progress in their chosen study programmes
 - ensuring all students achieve at least a GCSE grade C in both English and

mathematics

- raising levels of attendance
- listening to the views of students and increasing their involvement in a relevant and fulfilling enrichment programme that better develops their life skills.

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 should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 4 July 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the executive headteacher, the chair of the academy improvement board and the national leader of education advising the board. Inspectors spoke with pupils during breaktime. Leaders and inspectors jointly visited lessons for a range of year groups and subjects, including lessons for pupils who are new to speaking English.

All areas for improvement were considered during the inspection, with a particular focus on:

- the effectiveness of the provision made for pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who are new to speaking English
- how well leaders evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment
- the effectiveness of the school's work to improve pupils' reading skills.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in March 2017, leaders have reorganised the roles and work of the support staff within school. This reorganisation has involved approximately a hundred of the school's existing staff. The new structure, including many new roles, will be in place in September 2017.

The academy improvement board has met once, in May 2017, and is due to meet the week after this inspection. The board is now advised by the national leader of education from Haslingden School and Sixth Form.

Trustees of Southfield Grange Trust are currently consulting about Grange Technology College being sponsored by a new multi-academy trust that is being proposed by the governing body of Guiseley School.

On the day of the inspection, Year 11 and Year 13 pupils had left the school and Year 12 pupils were visiting a university.

Inspectors were aware during the inspection that allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the local authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the allegations were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has remained unrelenting in her pursuit of improvement in all the areas identified at the last inspection. The new leadership team is quickly developing a more purposeful approach to its individual and corporate leadership. As a result, new initiatives are being built into the school's work without compromising the effectiveness of the developments to date.

Although time-consuming and difficult, the work to restructure the leadership team and current work to restructure the support team have significantly reduced the projected budget deficit. More importantly, it has enabled leaders to redirect the pupil premium grant so that it is used in the way it is intended. The impact of new staff roles focusing on the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and providing support for the high number of vulnerable pupils will not be felt until next term when the jobs start. However, leaders have successfully appointed a full-time social worker, a counsellor and a part-time educational psychologist. These and other new posts ensure that the budget and staffing are tightly aligned to the improvement priorities identified at the last full inspection.

The academy improvement board (AIB) has only met once. However, the minutes of that meeting and discussions with members demonstrate that they have the skills and commitment to help steer the school's improvement effectively. The two-year commitment from members and the adviser will bridge the anticipated removal of special measures and the transfer to new trust arrangements. This is providing a promise of consistency that is much needed by senior leaders and the school. The AIB has agreed to the most recent version of the academy improvement plan. AIB members have a keen eye on the evidence they will require to ensure that targets have been met within appropriate timescales and that the work is making the difference leaders intend.

Trustees, the chief executive officer and the executive headteacher are focused on the complex work involved in the chosen route to rebroker the school to a newly forming multi-academy trust. They report that the consultation process has not met with resistance and anticipate that changes in the governance arrangements will be agreed shortly. The separation of duties between the trustees and the AIB indicates that they have responded positively to the recommendations made by the second review of governance commissioned by the trustees.

A particular focus of this inspection was the improvement in how senior and middle leaders are evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning. A series of joint lesson observations and observations of leaders feeding back to teachers confirm that there has been some progress in this area. The leaders' requirement for teachers to complete seating plans that provide information about the specific needs and priorities for individual pupils is helping teachers plan more effectively. It also supports leaders to be diagnostic in their approach to monitoring teaching. Inspectors and leaders broadly agreed about the effectiveness of the teaching seen.

This includes improvements in how pupils' work is planned and the progress seen in pupils' books. However, it remains the case that there is too much variation in the effectiveness of teaching and that not all staff use the assessment information available to plan lessons that promote rapid progress. Improvements are being made, and leaders are more precise and therefore more helpful to teachers in advising and guiding them about what needs to be done differently.

Inspectors also checked the written records of leaders' visits to lessons and other checks on teachers' effectiveness. The records demonstrate that not all leaders have developed as well as most. Some leaders still focus on compliance and teachers' activity rather than the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Overall, the school is in a stronger position to drive forward the key priority of improving the effectiveness of teaching.

Senior leaders have additionally worked on improving the curriculum to ensure that it is more closely matched to the needs of pupils. For example, personal, social and health education (PSHE) will be taught by a subject specialist rather than by all teachers in form time.

As the overwhelming majority of pupils speak English as an additional language, they are recognised as one of the key groups of pupils within the school. Pupils are now assessed according to their proficiency as speakers of English. This detailed information is now used by teachers to support their planning and to raise their expectations of pupils who are fluent English speakers both at home and school.

More than 200 pupils are new to speaking English. Over the last six months, leaders have developed a more incisive approach to checking the provision for this group, including using an external consultant. However, the provision to ensure that pupils learn to speak, read and write English quickly, to a standard that will help them learn well in all subjects, is not effective enough. Leaders acknowledge that some staff do not model clear standard spoken English or consistently model grammatically correct written English or correct spelling. The staff have positive relationships with pupils and the majority of pupils receive the emotional support they need to settle in school. However, this is not enough to help them acquire English to the standard that will enable them to flourish academically.

Leaders responded promptly to the absence of systematic teaching of phonics noted at the last monitoring inspection. They have secured training and ongoing advice for a phonics-based programme that they are trialling with Year 7 and Year 10 pupils. At the time of the inspection, the pupils involved had not had their reading ages retested to see if they have made rapid gains in their reading skills. However, inspectors saw pupils improving their knowledge of letters and the sounds that they represent during lessons. Leaders have set up the programme specifically to test the difference it makes for different groups of pupils with different barriers to learning in how to read fluently. The end of term reading test results will inform leaders' decisions about whether to use the approach or not from September.

Through the work on phonics, leaders have demonstrated their incisive understanding of the need to get to the heart of the barriers to pupils making good progress and find a range of solutions that address specific needs.

Leaders have ensured that the pupils' safety and well-being remain at the heart of the school's work. Recent terrorist attacks against a Muslim community in London have led to a rapid response from leaders, working with the local police. Additional planned work over the summer break will enhance security further. Safeguarding checks and procedures remain securely in place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders' records and inspection evidence confirm that teachers are responding to the targeted support and guidance they are being given to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. This includes teachers working on supply as well as those who have permanent contracts.

Examples of questioning that challenges pupils to think deeply and give clearly articulated answers now feature in lessons. Pupils are able to explain the gains in their knowledge and understanding. Most teachers use assessment information and information about pupils' special educational needs to inform their planning. Teachers new to different class groups quickly get up to speed with which pupils are falling behind and so give them additional attention to help them catch up.

Leaders acknowledge that inconsistencies in all aspects of teachers' practice dilute the overall impact of teaching on the progress pupils make.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils told inspectors that behaviour in lessons and around school continues to improve. During the inspection, the school was a calm and orderly place. The exception was a few younger pupils who did not manage their own behaviour well during lesson change-overs. Conversely, Year 10 pupils demonstrated positive changes in their ability to manage themselves in the absence of a teacher.

Attendance remains stuck at a level that is too low. Leaders continue to seek different ways of ensuring that all pupils and their families are committed to good attendance. Leaders anticipate that the new staff roles being introduced in September will support better attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders' confidence is supported by the 2% increase in the attendance of the Roma pupils. This follows the introduction of a member of staff dedicated to working with the local Roma community to improve their understanding of the benefits of good school attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

As pupils' behaviour has settled and teaching is more effective, pupils are making more progress in lessons. This is demonstrated by improvement in the work in their books. As in all schools, leaders await the results of GCSE, AS- and A-level examinations to see if their work has translated into improved results for pupils at the end of Years 11, 12 and 13.

External support

The executive headteacher from Guiseley School continues to support the leadership team, alongside the headteacher who is on a long-term, full-time secondment from the same school. The relationship between the two schools is growing in anticipation of Guiseley School sponsoring Grange within an evolving multi-academy trust. Senior staff are beginning to work across both schools to develop the necessary relationships to ensure a smooth transition.

Trustees have continued to use an external consultant to work with the headteacher to evaluate the impact of the changes being introduced to the school. Additionally, a specialist external consultant has reviewed provision for pupils who are new to speaking English. Leaders have drawn up an appropriate action plan as a result of her recommendations.

The AIB is benefiting from the guidance of the national leader of education from Haslingden High School and Sixth Form. His knowledge and experience of leading an effective school are strengthening board members' understanding of the information they receive and when and how to challenge the school's leaders.