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Mr Alan Fletcher
Acting Principal
King's Lynn Academy
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Dear Mr Fletcher

Special measures monitoring inspection of King's Lynn Academy

Following my visit with John Randall, Her Majesty's Inspector, who shadowed me on the visit to your school on 12 and 13 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 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 November 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 improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - trust leaders and governors hold school leaders to account for raising standards
 - leaders evaluate the quality of teaching rigorously through a sharp analysis of pupils' progress
 - middle leaders are enabled to swiftly tackle weaker teaching and the underperformance of pupils in their subject areas
 - school priorities are understood by all staff, so that support provided for disadvantaged pupils enables them to achieve well
 - provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good so that they can learn more effectively.
- Improve the consistency of teaching, learning and assessment across the school by:
 - equipping teachers to use assessment information to plan learning that is challenging, allows pupils to deepen their understanding and demonstrates higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able pupils
 - making sure that teachers use the agreed school feedback protocols consistently
 - ensuring that teachers intervene quickly and effectively to correct pupils' misconceptions.
- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in English and mathematics by:
 - raising the expectations of pupils' reading and writing across the curriculum
 - ensuring that pupils develop their mastery of mathematical concepts before moving on to new learning.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 to 13 July 2017

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you and other senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, a group of pupils and the chief executive of the trust. I also met with an external challenge partner commissioned to support the school and to lead its new interim executive board (IEB). Together with your senior leaders, I observed pupils at work in six lessons. I also scrutinised a sample of pupils' work in English and mathematics.

Context

Since the last inspection, the previous principal has left the school and you have taken up your post as acting principal. An experienced leader of English has joined the school. Three members of staff have been promoted to the senior leadership team. The previous trust, the College of West Anglia, has withdrawn its sponsorship of the school. Since May 2017, the school has been part of the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust. An IEB set up by the previous trust following the last inspection to monitor improvement has recently been replaced with a new IEB.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

A delay in publishing the inspection report, and changes to the school's leadership and sponsor have slowed the school's initial improvement. However, this has accelerated since your appointment. You are providing much-needed leadership which is galvanising staff and raising morale. You have the full support of your staff and the trust to make the necessary improvements.

You have quickly gained a clear overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Your long-term aims are clearly expressed in the school's statement of action and rapid improvement plan. Improvement priorities are closely aligned to the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection, and to other aspects identified by your own monitoring as requiring further improvement.

All of your staff understand the actions needed to strengthen the school, and the contribution they must make to aid its removal from special measures. Your extended team of senior leaders understand their roles and responsibilities. Some of them are new to senior leadership. You and the trust acknowledge that the team needs to demonstrate promptly that it has the capacity to secure and sustain improvements.

Middle leaders, including subject and pastoral leaders, have received training and

support in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision. This is at an early stage of development but is already beginning to complement the information gained from your own enhanced programme of lesson monitoring. My meeting with a group of middle leaders confirmed that they have a clear understanding of their roles in monitoring the quality of teaching in their departments, and providing support to strengthen it where needed. Evaluations of their departments' work are in place. Some of these are detailed and identify accurately the strengths and weaknesses. Others need further work.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium carried out earlier this year found that funding was not being used well enough. In response, you have appointed a new leader to oversee the spending and impact of the pupil premium. From September 2017, a new strategy will ensure that this funding is targeted solely towards those it is intended to support.

Trust leaders are providing you with sufficient support and challenge. They have rightly focused their efforts on strengthening the school's leadership and providing you with additional resources to make the necessary improvements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

In the short space of time since your appointment, you have rightly prioritised raising expectations of staff and pupils, making leaders and managers far more accountable and ensuring that this year's Year 11 pupils are suitably prepared for examinations. You have had less impact on gaining greater consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. My own observations confirmed that teaching varies widely. A new strategy is in place to improve teaching but this is at an early stage of development. Revised plans to improve teaching further and at a faster rate are being prepared for implementation next term.

Leaders analyse information gained from assessments in English and mathematics to identify where additional support is needed for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This informs support staff where they need to intervene to support individual pupils. However, the information is not used by teachers to tailor learning that aids pupils' learning in lessons.

Pupils' books show that expectations of pupils are not always high enough. Some work is poorly presented and often left unfinished. My scrutiny of English books revealed a noticeable difference between girls' and boys' work. Poor presentation is left unchallenged by teachers in their marking. Common errors in spelling and grammar are usually corrected, but pupils are not given time to revisit their work and learn from their mistakes.

Similar poor presentation is evident in mathematics books. Pupils are not shown how to lay out their work neatly, or use the right equipment when drawing shapes,

tables and graphs. There is an over-reliance on self-review and peer-marking. This leads to pupils repeating the same mistakes because teachers do not intervene early to correct misconceptions.

You know where the strengths and weaknesses lie in teaching and were able to steer me towards the school's best practice. Good relationships, effective management of behaviour and high expectations were evident in a range of subjects. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan learning in detail. They provide time for pupils to learn key skills, and work together in groups and by themselves to apply them fully. This expertise is not shared well enough to promote good practice throughout the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

During the inspection, I found pupils to be well behaved and courteous. During lessons and around school they were respectful and pleasant to staff and their peers. However, your own monitoring shows that you do have some concerns about pupils' behaviour, and how it is managed in lessons. Behaviour records show that referrals to your reflection room due to poor attitudes or low-level disruption are too high. Your detailed analysis has revealed the reasons for this, and action is being taken to reduce the number of referrals. New arrangements to avoid excluding pupils from school are working well. No pupils have been permanently excluded under your leadership. The proportion of fixed-term exclusions was high but this is now falling significantly.

Attendance is below average. Your records show that it is rising but also highlight some concerns about the attendance of disadvantaged pupils compared with that of others in the school. You have strengthened procedures to intervene early at the first signs of absence, and ensured that pastoral leads have a clearer understanding of the expectations of them in tackling the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Unresolved inconsistencies in teaching lead to variable rates of progress made by pupils in lessons. Teachers are not using the information gained from assessments to plan learning that meets the different needs of pupils. Their 'one-size-fits-all' approach to teaching means that the most able pupils are not challenged fully, and less able pupils struggle to complete tasks that are too hard for them. When asked, pupils told me that overall, they feel that they are making better progress this year. They also feel that they could be pushed harder than they are currently, to enable them to achieve what they feel they are capable of attaining.

Your self-evaluation and inspection findings confirm that pupils make better progress in mathematics than they do in English. This is because mathematics teachers are better organised, learning is usually well planned and the leadership of

the subject is more established. However, further improvements are needed in mathematics to develop pupils' mastery of mathematical concepts, and to enhance the quality of their presentation. You highlighted a number of other subjects where effective planning enables pupils to make good progress, such as art and design technology.

Reading is promoted effectively through regular opportunities to read aloud in lessons, a programme of accelerated reading and weekly library lessons. The teaching of writing is less effective. Pupils' books in English and in a range of other subjects show few examples of extended writing. I noted that in science, the most able pupils complete good-quality writing, but also found that less able pupils, particularly boys, do not structure their writing well enough, and expectations of what they produce are too low.

You and your leaders recognise the links between what your increased monitoring of lessons is showing, the results from externally marked tests and the evidence of progress over time recorded in pupils' books. You have increased your analysis of all of this information to gain a more accurate understanding of how well all pupils are achieving. You acknowledge that until the inconsistencies in teaching are ironed out, progress will continue to vary across and within subjects.

A range of revision classes and interventions to support individual pupils in Year 11 has helped to ensure that they were better prepared for their GCSE and vocational examinations. You and your senior team have outlined overall results expected, and predict that results will remain similar to those attained last year. Rightly, you are awaiting further information to enable you to make direct comparisons with your pupils' outcomes and the results achieved nationally.

External support

The trust has commissioned a range of external consultancy to support leaders and managers, and to monitor and evaluate their impact on making improvements.

An external review of governance earlier this year found key weaknesses in the quality of the school's leadership and governance. This led to removal of the governing body. An IEB set up to replace it by the previous trust has now been replaced by a new one. The trust has commissioned an experienced, external challenge partner to chair monthly meetings of this board, and to report directly to the trust board.