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Mr Ian Woolerton
Acting Headteacher
The West Grantham Academy St John's
Trent Road
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Dear Mr Woolerton

Special measures monitoring inspection of The West Grantham Academy St John's

Following my visit to your academy on 13–14 September 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 academy's recent section 5 inspection.

This inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2017.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose (please see comments below).

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

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

Yours sincerely

John Lawson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2017.

- Tackle weaknesses in the school's arrangements to protect pupils and keep them safe urgently, by:
 - ensuring that the leaders responsible for this aspect of the school's work have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to carry out their roles effectively
 - ensuring that records of concerns about pupils' well-being are detailed, thorough and properly maintained, so that leaders can be certain that appropriate action is taken to protect the pupils at risk of harm
 - ensuring that school leaders inform the appropriate agencies when pupils who are at risk are identified and that they devise clear systems to make sure that concerns are acted on quickly and effectively
 - tackling aggressive and overly boisterous behaviour and the high incidence of bullying effectively, so that pupils feel safe and protected when they are at school
 - ensuring that the curriculum adheres to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by promoting tolerance towards people with protected characteristics
 - ensuring that governors maintain proper oversight of the effectiveness of the school's arrangements to safeguard children from harm and to promote tolerance towards others.
- Strengthen all aspects of leadership, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels have the knowledge, skills and understanding to carry out their roles effectively
 - ensuring that roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear, so that leaders, staff and governors understand precisely who is responsible for what
 - increasing the accuracy of leaders' evaluation of teaching
 - ensuring that rigorous systems are in place to inform the school's own self-evaluation and future school improvement planning.
- Improve outcomes rapidly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, by:
 - ensuring that the additional funding provided to support pupils who have additional needs is allocated to those for whom it is intended, including children who are looked after
 - ensuring that the leaders responsible have the knowledge, understanding, skills and authority to carry out their roles effectively

- strengthening the school’s systems for identifying pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they can quickly be given the support that they need
 - tracking the impact of additional spending rigorously, so that leaders have a strong understanding of the difference it is making to pupils’ achievement and so that further action can be taken if achievement remains low
 - increasing the impact of teaching assistants in lessons, so that they consistently make a demonstrable contribution to pupils’ achievement.
- Improve pupils’ attendance, particularly the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school.
 - Ensure that leaders tackle lateness more effectively, so that pupils routinely arrive to school on time.
 - Improve the quality of teaching and thereby improve outcomes for all groups of pupils, including the most able pupils, by:
 - holding teachers to account more effectively for the quality of their teaching and the achievement of the different groups of pupils they teach
 - raising teachers’ expectations of what pupils can do and how pupils should behave
 - improving teachers’ skills in adapting learning to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, including least-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and most-able pupils
 - strengthening transition arrangements between the early years and key stage 1, so that the gains children make in the early years are not lost in Year 1
 - equipping teachers with the skills necessary to make effective use of classroom assistants and ensuring that they do so consistently.

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 first monitoring inspection on 13–14 September 2017

Evidence

The inspector met with the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, senior and middle leaders and other staff. He also met with the chair and members of the trust board and the trust executive headteacher. The inspector spoke with parents at the beginning of the day and with pupils informally at breaktimes as well as meeting a group of pupils. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and between lessons.

The inspector visited 11 lessons, jointly with the acting headteacher, across different subjects and year groups on both school sites. During these visits, the inspector looked at pupils' work and spoke with them to evaluate the quality of their learning. He also examined the work in a sample of pupils' books. The inspector scrutinised a variety of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' attainment and progress, and staff performance. A range of plans for improvement were evaluated. The inspector considered the 19 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The inspector assessed the impact of leaders' actions taken since the last inspection. A particular focus was on the areas for improvement relating to leadership and management, safeguarding, behaviour, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the use of additional funding.

Context

Since the last inspection, one of the acting deputy headteachers and one class teacher have left the school. The trust has appointed a coordinator for provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to support both academies.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher and the trust are effectively addressing some of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Many recently introduced initiatives are at an early stage of development. Leaders have strengthened leadership structures and are developing leadership at all levels. There is now greater clarity over roles and responsibilities. Middle leaders and class teachers are clearer about the expectations of senior leaders. Staff are supportive of senior leaders and committed to improving outcomes for pupils.

The acting headteacher and the trust have rightly prioritised tackling the weaknesses in the school's safeguarding arrangements. Leaders have acted upon the findings from the internal and external reviews of safeguarding commissioned by the trust. Leaders have ensured that staff understand the school's procedures for

reporting concerns raised. Procedures for recording concerns and the use of the school's electronic system to support leaders' analysis are much improved and more rigorous. The leaders for safeguarding work effectively across the two academies and three sites of the trust, sharing information and taking appropriate actions. Training for staff has been provided. Leaders have not, however, ensured that all staff are confident in their understanding as some members of staff were unsure about the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders adapted and incorporated the statement of action produced following the previous inspection into the current improvement plan. The plan is fit for purpose because it addresses the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. However, it does not focus sharply enough on targets for pupils' attainment and progress or the specific actions needed to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to drive more rapid improvement. Leaders have introduced a more robust approach to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment throughout the school. However, improvement plans have not fully used the findings from this work and recommendations from external reviews.

In the past, leaders have not managed teachers' performance effectively to improve pupils' attainment and progress. The acting headteacher has introduced a cycle of performance management which sets targets relating to the quality of teaching, the achievement of different groups of pupils and developing leadership roles. Teachers are supportive of this expectation. However, the targets set are too general. Members of the trust board are clear about the need for greater rigour in this aspect of the school's work and recognise that their role needs greater development.

The last inspection identified that an area in need of significant improvement was to improve outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Little progress has been made and this aspect requires significant improvement. The trust appointed a new coordinator for provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in July 2017. Since her appointment, she has formed an accurate analysis and clear vision for how provision needs to be structured to move forward. However, it is not currently possible for leaders and the governing board to effectively analyse the progress made by pupils or evaluate the impact of the additional funding for these pupils. The new coordinator has a clear plan of action to establish robust systems for identifying pupils' needs, providing and reviewing appropriate provision. Leaders are aware that this work needs to be implemented urgently.

The attainment and progress for disadvantaged pupils overall have declined at the end of key stages 1 and 2. While the trust board made concerted efforts to organise an external review and appointed a pupil premium advocate, the review of the pupil premium had not taken place at the time of the monitoring inspection. Leaders and the governing board have not tracked the impact of this additional funding rigorously. Leaders have not carefully targeted the use of the pupil premium in the

past. Current plans need to be more closely linked to pupils' attainment and progress as well as other improvement plans. Leaders are aware that strategically addressing these vital areas of the school's work is a priority.

Middle leaders have benefited from the training opportunities and external support organised by the acting headteacher and the trust. They say they feel more empowered in their roles by senior leaders. Middle leaders are beginning to have impact on the development of the curriculum and improving the quality of teaching. For example, they are leading the development of a 'mastery' curriculum for mathematics, raising expectations for standards in spelling, grammar and punctuation, and promoting positive attitudes to reading through the 'monthly author' focus, as well as developments in science and other aspects of the curriculum. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this work. Subject improvement plans are not sufficiently sharply linked to pupils' attainment and progress to drive more rapid improvement. However, the impact of this approach was evident in phonics, where standards are improving. Leaders have ensured that staff are trained to teach the school's phonics programme and they check pupils' progress very closely. Pupils who are falling behind are quickly identified and support is provided to help them catch up.

Under the leadership of the chair, the trust board is improving the effectiveness of its role. The review of governance was completed and the trust board has been effective in improving its ability to provide proper oversight of the effectiveness of the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils. This has been an area in which emphasis has been rightly placed. Members of the governing board now visit the school more regularly, meeting staff, reviewing safeguarding and discussing pupils' progress and behaviour. This is improving their knowledge of the school and enabling them to be more effective in their role. The chair of the board led an assembly to promote the school's values.

However, the trust board has been less effective in holding leaders to account for the impact of additional funding, particularly the use of the pupil premium and the additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Members of the trust board have also not been sufficiently rigorous in holding the school to account for improving the quality of teaching through, for example, the effective management of teachers' performance. They have not ensured that improvement planning is sufficiently supporting the improved attainment and progress of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The new performance management process has given teachers a clearer understanding of leaders' expectations for their classroom practice. Many initiatives, such as the mastery approach in mathematics, are at an early stage of development. Improvements have been made to the quality of teaching, but improvement planning and the programme of training for teachers needs to be

more focused and targeted to bring about more rapid improvements.

Leaders have ensured that teachers have had opportunities to improve their skills in accurately assessing pupils' learning. However, teachers do not consistently use this information when planning and within lessons. This means that, often, the least able pupils are not effectively supported and the most able are not sufficiently challenged. As a result, pupils are not making the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Teachers generally have secure subject knowledge. Where teaching is strongest, teachers use effective questioning, resources and imagery to support pupils' learning; they remind pupils of their previous learning and effectively manage behaviour. However, further significant improvements in the quality of teaching are necessary to increase pupils' attainment and progress across the school. In different subjects, too often teachers ask pupils of different abilities to complete the same work. The inspector noted instances where pupils offered quality contributions in lessons. This was inconsistent and there is considerable scope to develop higher levels of engagement of pupils in their learning if work is more closely matched to their needs. It is vital that teachers use information about pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding to plan activities that meet their learning needs and adjust their teaching within lessons.

Developing the use of teaching assistants was identified as an area for improvement in the previous report. Teachers have not had training to improve this aspect of their practice. While in some lessons, teaching assistants provided effective support, this is not consistent. Teaching assistants have recently received the first part of a programme of training to improve their expertise in supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and enable them to support more effectively the learning of all pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The acting headteacher has taken action to improve standards of behaviour. Leaders and most staff said that behaviour had improved, and was improving. Leaders have introduced a new behaviour and rewards policy which has raised expectations for behaviour in lessons and around the school. Teachers demonstrate a consistent approach to managing behaviour that pupils understand and respond to. Behaviour is stronger where teachers plan work that meets the needs of pupils which engages them and involves them in their learning.

Pupils themselves say that behaviour has improved and is 'OK'. They also told the inspector that they wished 'there was less fighting'. Some rough play was observed on the playground and arrangements for lining up or moving around the school were not consistently as orderly as they might be. However, the inspector saw no evidence of 'fighting' and the acting headteacher said that such incidents were increasingly rare. The inspector observed no poor behaviour in classrooms.

Pupils and some parents said that there was bullying in the school, but that teachers and leaders dealt effectively with any issues. When asked to define what bullying was, some pupils in key stage 2 were unsure. Pupils were confident that teachers would address any concerns they had. School records show that leaders now carefully record reported concerns.

Leaders have further developed the school's values system and place emphasis on the theme 'Treat others as you wish to be treated yourself', which staff link to the management of pupils' behaviour. Leaders have also reviewed the curriculum to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These developments are at a very early stage, and some pupils the inspector spoke with did not fully understand the importance of respect for others who may be different to them or who may have different family arrangements. Pupils' understanding of how to keep safe was also rather general, including how to stay safe online.

Attendance has not improved since the last inspection. The attendance officer and the educational welfare officer check attendance and punctuality on an ongoing basis. They conduct home visits with families of those pupils who have high persistent absence. Leaders are working to emphasise the importance of attendance with parents and offer pupils a range of rewards for attendance in school. However, the attendance for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, declined at the end of 2017 compared to the previous year. It is important that leaders and the trust board review strategies to improve attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

The last inspection identified the need to improve the quality of teaching and thereby improve outcomes for groups of pupils, including the most able pupils. While leaders have introduced many new initiatives and systems, these are not yet having positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress widely across the school.

The proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development at the end of the early years, particularly those who are disadvantaged, has improved and pupils are well prepared for Year 1. The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, including those who are disadvantaged, has also improved, though this is still well below the national average.

However, based on the school's information, at the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils' attainment and progress have declined further in most areas compared to pupils' achievement in 2016. Attainment is well below that seen nationally, sometimes significantly so, for reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who are disadvantaged do less well than their peers and much less well than other pupils nationally. Pupils' work shows that expectations for standards of grammar, punctuation and spelling are too low. In lessons, too many pupils do not make the

progress of which they are capable.

Leaders are aware that it is crucial that improvements to leadership and management and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment lead to accelerating the progress and raising the attainment of all groups of pupils.

External support

The trust has provided effective support since the last inspection. The trust has commissioned a range of external reviews and other additional support. These have been effective in securing improvements. The trust has established new leadership roles across and within the two academies. Until recently, the trust commissioned support from another academy trust to support the review of a range of aspects of the school's work and identify priorities for improvement.

Leaders have responded well to advice and are taking actions in response to review findings. Leaders have been proactive in seeking external support, consultancy and working with a cluster of local schools to, for example, check the accuracy of assessment in reading, writing and mathematics. A programme of support working with a national leader for education is currently under way.