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26 September 2017

Mr M Astley  
St Peter's Academy  
Fenton Manor  
Fenton  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST4 2RR

Dear Mr Astley

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 11 September 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- swiftly implement the new plan for removing the barriers to disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress
- reduce pupils' absence and persistent absence.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, two vice principals, middle leaders, members of the interim executive board (IEB), a representative of the current trust and a representative of the City Learning Trust, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation, action plan and analysis of the 2017 outcomes for Year 11 were evaluated. The pupil premium review and plan, minutes of IEB meetings, information about appraisal and documentation about the quality of teaching and learning were also

scrutinised. A learning walk was also undertaken with the headteacher.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has continued to restructure leadership responsibilities at all levels across the school. A different leader has taken on the responsibility for disadvantaged pupils. The IEB, which functions as a local governing body, has also been restructured. The small team of four governors has been increased to eight and there is governor representation on a range of committees.

At the time of the inspection, the school expected to be re-brokered to a new trust imminently. A final date and confirmation of this was not in place.

## **Main findings**

Following the previous inspection the headteacher and other leaders formed action plans which specifically addressed all of the areas for improvement specified in the report. These action plans are detailed and outline timescales. They name who is responsible for different actions, and provide for an evaluation of progress against the targets. Many of the actions have been completed already, but it is too early to see the full impact of most of these changes.

The headteacher has continued to develop the culture of ambition in the school. He has restructured the wider leadership team so that all leaders have specific, well-understood roles which relate to outcomes for pupils. He has a strong focus on developing leaders at all levels to create capacity for the future. For example, some middle leaders who aspire to senior leadership have benefited from a range of experiences to build their skills. They have undertaken whole-school tasks and enjoyed new challenges which are beginning to prepare them for senior leadership.

All middle leaders, including subject leaders, are now clear about what is expected of them, and receive bespoke support when appropriate. They are held to account and are becoming more consistently effective in leading their areas of responsibility. Middle leaders say that communication with senior leaders is effective because senior leaders have put formal structures in place to seek their views. As a result, they are more fully involved in whole-school planning and decision-making.

All staff in the school are committed to improving pupils' progress and contribute to enriching pupils' experience in school. Each experienced member of teaching staff has chosen an extra whole-school role. This has added significant capacity to the leadership team and created opportunities for experienced staff to take on wider responsibilities such as leading on developing an awareness of attachment disorder, promoting aspects of personal development and ensuring that the pupils' voice is heard. The development of each responsibility is monitored by a senior leader with a clear focus on pupil-centred outcomes. This set of activities has the potential to

add much value to pupils' experience.

Senior leaders have revised the role of 'raising standards leaders' (RSLs) so that they are responsible for groups of pupils within similar characteristics across all year groups instead of a single year group. While the impact of this change has yet to be fully seen, leaders' early evaluations show that these RSLs are becoming more specialised in supporting particular pupil groups and getting to know pupils and their families well. As a result, they are having a positive impact on attendance and pupils' progress.

Leaders have made sure that the process of assessment is very clear to teachers, pupils and parents. They have rightly placed an emphasis on the accuracy of assessments so that interventions are well focused and can have the maximum impact. In 2016/17, many departments made very accurate assessments of their pupils' attainment. As a result, teachers are more able to tailor their lessons to pupils' needs. Whole-school reviews of assessment practices show some areas of strength developing. Regular meetings focusing on groups of pupils' attainment and progress are now a part of the timetabled day for staff, meaning that staff have the capacity to contribute fully to intervention plans for pupils who fall behind.

The IEB has been strategically reformed in the light of the progress that the school has made. A larger group of governors with a broad and very relevant skillset have been sourced, and new committees for each of the school's key functions have been established. Many of these governors have experience of senior educational leadership meaning that they have much to offer in terms of support and holding leaders to account. It is clear from governing body minutes and discussions with governors that they have an accurate view of the school's priorities, and the knowledge and experience to offer leaders thought-provoking challenge when appropriate.

In 2017, Year 11 pupils' attainment improved on some key measures. For example, the proportion of pupils gaining a standard pass in both GCSE English and mathematics examinations rose in 2017. The percentage of pupils gaining the English Baccalaureate also improved. The percentage of pupils gaining a grade C or above in GCSE examinations in most subjects also improved. While at the time of inspection there was no national data against which to make comparisons, these improvements are pleasing. Leaders focus their interventions on pupils across all year groups. The school's own assessment information shows that pupils across the school are making better progress against their targets than in the past.

A new special educational needs coordinator has been appointed and has carefully reviewed the special educational needs of all pupils. As a result there have been considerable changes to the list of pupils who need additional support, with some pupils being assessed as needing an education, health and care plan and some being identified as no longer needing extra help. This means that interventions are closely focused on the needs of pupils who require extra support. The full impact of

these actions has yet to be seen.

Since the last inspection, pupils' attendance has continued to improve and it is now approaching the national average. Leaders have robust plans in place to improve it to at least the national average. Although the impact of these plans have yet to be seen, the plans are well considered and focus on directly addressing the barriers to some pupils' attendance.

The school has received effective support from its sponsor, the Woodard Academies Trust. For example, the trust has provided financial and human resources services. The headteacher is a part of the trust's senior leader network and benefits from working alongside other senior leaders across the trust's schools. The Woodard Trust has also commissioned the City Learning Trust to provide a variety of school improvement services. For example, teachers from a range of subjects have worked alongside expert staff from other schools in the City Learning Trust to develop schemes of work and moderate assessments contributing to greater accuracy of assessment. The City Learning Trust has also contributed to robust faculty reviews resulting in faculty action plans and a range of improvements.

The sponsorship of the academy is likely to be rebrokered. There has been considerable uncertainty about the date of this rebrokering for some time. However, the headteacher, chair of the IEB and the present trust have worked together carefully and constructively to make sure that this does not have a negative impact on pupils or staff. Governors have, therefore, been able to focus keenly on outcomes for pupils, and holding school leaders to account.

### **External support**

The school commissioned Blackfriars Teaching School Alliance to complete a pupil premium review in November 2016. However, leaders have not yet fully implemented the action plan that followed the review. A new leader with responsibility for disadvantaged pupils took up post very recently and is beginning to implement the plan. It is too early to see the impact of this more focused work on the outcomes for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, but early indications are positive: disadvantaged pupils' attendance and attainment has improved since the last inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the trust, chair of the interim executive board, the director of education for the diocese of Lichfield, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dan Owen  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**