

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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4 December 2017

Mrs Kirsty Jones  
Headteacher  
Willenhall E-ACT Academy  
Furzebank Way  
Willenhall  
West Midlands  
WV12 4BD

Dear Mrs Jones

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Willenhall E-ACT Academy**

Following my visit with Helen Reeve, Ofsted Inspector, and Clare Considine, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 21–22 November 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 March 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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs). I would ask that I am informed of any decisions that may result in the appointment of NQTs before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the raising achievement board, the regional

schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2017.**

- Act with urgency to ensure that all pupils are safe at the school by:
  - addressing pupils' poor behaviour through insisting on their adherence to school expectations and gaining the full support of their parents
  - ensuring all staff implement the school's behaviour management policy consistently and effectively, and that this policy offers suitable sanctions and appropriate support and rewards to pupils
  - improving the attendance of pupils, including those in alternative provision, through analysing strategies which have been successful previously, intervening early and working more closely with parents
  - ensuring that pupils receive high-quality information in lessons, and through the pastoral system, that enables them to recognise, avoid and deal with potentially dangerous situations.
- Ensure that the extra funding the school received to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well to raise their achievement rapidly.
- Improve the impact of leadership, including governance, by:
  - becoming more precise in setting and reviewing actions and using this information rigorously for further improvement
  - meeting the statutory duty to deliver careers education, information, advice and guidance, and ensure that those pupils who have currently missed out have additional opportunities to acquire this support
  - check that communication with parents and the publication of information on the website meets statutory requirements
  - ensuring that senior and middle leaders are fully accountable for the necessary and urgent improvements required in safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and achievement.
- Improve the quality of the 16 to 19 study programme by analysing and improving the assessment system and outcomes for learners following academic courses.
- Improve teaching at key stages 3 and 4 so that outcomes improve rapidly by:
  - embedding a coherent teaching strategy which is applied consistently throughout the school
  - ensuring teaching staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - setting pupils learning tasks which they understand, are suitably challenging, and that capture their attention so concentration does not diminish.

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

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 21–22 November 2017**

### **Evidence**

The monitoring inspection took place without any notice to the school and initially focused on pupils' behaviour. Inspectors observed pupils' conduct as they arrived and left school, during lessons, at social times and between lessons. Inspectors spoke to pupils about behaviour and their perceptions of the school in three meetings and informally. Inspectors also evaluated records about attendance and behaviour.

Inspectors observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects across key stages 3, 4 and 5. School leaders and representatives of E-ACT, the trust that sponsors the school, accompanied inspectors on some of these visits. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, a range of school leaders and other staff. Inspectors also consulted with representatives of E-ACT. Views of parents were considered from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation including the trust's statement of action and the school's action plans, policies, and information about pupils' attainment and progress. Additional documentation was scrutinised, for example minutes of the raising achievement board (RAB) and the school's procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher and many new senior leaders have been appointed. There have been changes to the roles and accountabilities of senior leaders. Some teachers left the school at the end of the summer term and leaders have been able to successfully appoint replacements to these posts. Also, the large number of vacancies at the time of the last inspection have been filled. Most of the staff recruited are permanent, although a few are on temporary contracts. Leaders have restructured the school's pastoral system, establishing tutor groups that contain pupils of similar ages. E-ACT has increased the frequency of RAB meetings. This board monitors and evaluates the progress the school is making regarding the areas for improvement.

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

The school's leadership has acted quickly to address the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection. There have been marked improvements in pupils' behaviour and safety as a result of actions taken. There are improvements in the quality of teaching, although these are as yet inconsistent. Early indications suggest that pupils' outcomes are starting to improve. However, actions taken in

the last school year had a limited impact on outcomes in the summer. The energy and enthusiasm of the new headteacher and other leaders to tackle the significant issues the school faces are clearly apparent. There are determination and ambition among staff to improve the school's effectiveness. Staff are supportive of leaders and are working hard to bring about the necessary changes.

The leadership of safeguarding has been strengthened with the appointment of a new designated safeguarding lead. Leaders have reviewed and, where appropriate, replaced school systems to improve their rigour. Safeguarding procedures have a high importance throughout the school and are maintained by staff. Staff are receiving regular and valuable training. Staff are clearly determined to improve the ways in which the school ensures the safety of all its pupils. For example, alterations to the school day and high levels of staff supervision have resulted in the pupils feeling safe when at school. Parents are now more involved in any issues concerning their children. Leaders make sure that regular and clear communication to parents within agreed timescales is now part of the school's approach. A well-planned programme of personal, social and health education includes a wide range of topics which now promote pupils' health and well-being.

Representatives of E-ACT, who are responsible for the governance of the school, regularly visit the school. Members of the RAB evaluate the progress made towards the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They talk to leaders and verify the information that they are given through a range of other activities, including visits to lessons. As a result, leaders are held rigorously and comprehensively to account for their actions. Members of the trust prioritise the identification and sourcing of additional appropriate resources and support in order to continue improvement. The school's website is currently being redeveloped by E-ACT to make sure that it meets statutory requirements. It remains important that improvements at the school are reflected in the current website prior to the launch of the new one.

Leaders have acted swiftly to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection around the school's use of alternative curriculum provision. Pupils now attend the Innovation Centre which is a more suitable site. Leaders now ensure that pupils follow a relevant curriculum which prepares them for the next stages of their education or training. Pupils benefit from newly established routines and systems that support positive conduct. As a result, there has been a dramatic rise in the pupils' attendance and they are starting to make progress.

The required external review of the use and impact of the pupil premium was completed in June 2017. The review identified that interventions for disadvantaged pupils in the past had not been successful and had not been robustly evaluated. Particularly poor outcomes were noted for disadvantaged pupils who had special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities or who had high prior attainment. A skilled and enthusiastic leader has recently been appointed and has developed a clear and detailed strategic plan in response to the external review. The plan

reflects the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face. Leaders' actions have established clear responsibilities and expectations for key staff and successfully raised teachers' awareness of the school's strategy. It is too soon for these actions to demonstrate a sustained impact on improving the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. However, recent assessment information suggests that rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils currently in Year 11 are improving as a result of better teaching. Leaders recognise that rates of progress must be further accelerated to make up lost ground.

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

Improving the impact of teaching on pupils' progress has been a key priority since the previous inspection. Successful recruitment of teachers to fill the large number of vacancies has substantially improved the impact of teaching on pupils' attitudes and progress. Leaders have a detailed understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching, gained through regular and extensive monitoring activities. While most teachers have welcomed the support and development opportunities, some chose to leave last year as a result of this increased rigour. Leaders effectively inform regular teacher development sessions using their knowledge about the quality of teaching. Teachers are directed to sessions that are relevant to their training needs. Where teachers require further support, additional coaching is provided that focuses sharply on the specific skills that require development. Staff who have received additional coaching have successfully improved their teaching.

While the impact of teaching remains variable, there are examples of strong practice within the school. Pupils recognise and respond positively when teaching supports their learning. They recognise and appreciate that the quality of teaching has improved. At times, teachers use successfully a variety of approaches. For example, they use questioning well to deepen pupils' responses and develop learning. This is particularly important to encourage pupils to expand the vocabulary they use in their answers. When teachers model their expectations, pupils understand clearly how to structure their work and so have the opportunity to succeed with the task in hand. Teachers use a consistent approach to structure their lessons and pupils are familiar with these established routines. However, teachers are not yet consistently considering the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This means that some pupils are not able to participate fully in learning activities and this affects how well they are doing. Similarly, pupils with high prior attainment are not challenged sufficiently when learning activities do not include opportunities for them to extend their learning further.

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

Leaders have taken very seriously the concerns identified at the previous inspection regarding pupils' conduct and their safety when at school. Improvements in school systems, including the structure of the school day, monitoring the school site and approaches to manage pupils' behaviour, have been highly successful.

Pupils arrive, leave and move around the school in a calm and orderly manner, supported by effective and vigilant staff supervision. Although the school site is complex and there are many small public areas that are accessible to pupils at social times, pupils socialise well and are very good-natured and generally calm. They respond positively and promptly to instructions from staff and move to their lessons on time. Some corridors become quite congested between lessons and while most pupils move calmly and sensibly, a few become a little boisterous in such situations. Social areas are busy at break and lunchtimes, but pupils queue patiently. Staff who work in the dining areas comment that the amount of litter left behind after lunchtime has reduced.

Pupils are polite and courteous, and greet visitors to their school cheerfully and respectfully. Pupils are well presented and most respond positively to staff reminders to keep their uniforms smart. They told inspectors that behaviour at the school has improved greatly. Pupils state that recent negative media coverage of their school is not reflective of their current experiences. Pupils are highly appreciative of the reduced number of temporary teachers at the school. They say that behaviour is better because staff now hold them to account for their actions. However, not all teachers consistently use the school's rewards and sanctions systems and there remains disruption to pupils' learning in some lessons. Pupils feel safe at school and can talk confidently about ways to keep themselves safe. For example, they have learned about risks from sexual exploitation, cyber bullying and mental health. Older pupils identify that there are gaps in this important aspect of their education and that teachers have not yet fully addressed these. Sixth-form students agree that there has been a substantial improvement in the school since the previous inspection. They value the relocation of sixth-form lessons to a specific area of the school. Sixth-formers also look forward to opportunities to contribute to the school's future through the new school council.

Leaders ensure that classrooms clearly display school expectations for conduct during lessons. Pupils generally have positive attitudes towards learning as a result of more stable staffing and more consistent use of the school's behaviour system. However, there remains variability in how effectively this supports pupils' behaviour. In some lessons, teachers do not make sure that pupils have met their expectations of behaviour before continuing the lesson. As a result, pupils are not consistently paying attention to the teacher or each other's contributions. This impacts negatively on their learning and can also affect that of other pupils. Generally, there are positive relationships between pupils and their teachers which are being used to develop a learning culture within the school.

Information leaders collect about behaviour over time shows an improving picture. Pupils are taking more responsibility for their behaviour, reflected in fewer detentions being issued and a reduction in the number of pupils missing detentions. Staff issue reward points consistently, and there has been an increase in higher-level rewards awarded during this term. There has been a sharp reduction in the



number of exclusions since the summer term.

Leaders have introduced systematic, efficient and responsive procedures to follow up pupils' non-attendance. There are now swift interventions with pupils and their families where concerns regarding attendance are identified. These actions have already successfully started to address poor attendance. The proportion of pupils persistently absent from school has declined. There have been very sharp improvements in the attendance of pupils who are educated at the school's Innovation Centre. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is also improving. An increasing proportion of pupils arrive at school on time and internal truancy from lessons has reduced by three quarters since last term. Despite these improvements, some variation remains. Year 11 pupils still attend school less frequently than pupils in other year groups.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Actions taken during the summer term to improve outcomes did not have a markedly positive impact in summer 2017. Overall rates of progress declined from the previous year. Analysis shows that the use of the pupil premium funding did not have a positive impact on the academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They made much less progress than other pupils nationally. Pupils who had SEN and/or disabilities made less progress than other pupils at the school. The proportion of pupils who achieved good GCSE grades in English and mathematics declined in 2017.

Leaders decided not to recruit pupils into the school's sixth form for September 2017. They identified a range of other suitable local post-16 providers for pupils and ensured that Year 11 pupils successfully received offers to continue their studies or start an apprenticeship. Leaders have developed a carefully planned and progressive programme of careers information, advice and guidance for pupils across all year groups. However, older pupils are subject to a legacy of previous gaps in this provision which still must be addressed.

There is evidence that outcomes for pupils are set to improve this year. Leaders' monitoring information suggests that pupils currently in Year 11 are now making better rates of progress than they did previously. For example, recent assessment information indicates that Year 11 pupils are currently meeting leaders' expectations for progress across a range of subjects. However, leaders recognise that there must be further rapid and sustained improvements in order to make up lost ground.

Leaders have taken action to make sure that assessments of students on 16 to 19 study programmes are of higher quality and more reliable. These have included ensuring that assessments identify which skills and content of qualifications require further work. Subject leaders are more confident in their judgements following training opportunities. Leaders now have a much more realistic picture of students' achievement. They are aware that current attainment, particularly on academic

courses, is markedly below expectations. Leaders have responded promptly to this, and are planning interventions to support those who are most at risk of considerable underachievement.

### **External support**

The trust has prioritised the school for additional support. The school is benefiting from high levels of carefully placed support in a number of key areas. The support provided is effective and welcomed by school staff. For example, a system leader from the trust has strengthened leadership of SEN and secured additional capacity in this area of high priority. The sponsor has also provided effective behaviour management training for teaching staff. A recent audit of the school's safeguarding provision has provided external validation of the success of leaders' actions to address this aspect of the school. Staff are benefiting from sharing best practice and expertise following establishment of strong links with other local schools. The impact of support is carefully evaluated by regular meetings of the RAB.