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7 December 2017

Mrs Denise Burrows  
Acting Headteacher  
Ernesford Grange Community Academy  
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West Midlands  
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Dear Mrs Burrows

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Ernesford Grange Community Academy**

Following my visit with Jacqueline Newsome, Ofsted inspector to your school on 29 to 30 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 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 am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2016.**

- Improve leadership and governance by ensuring that:
  - governors have the skills and understanding to hold school leaders to account for the school's performance
  - the curriculum at key stage 4 promotes all pupils' progress
  - teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are reliable
  - pupil premium funding has a positive impact on the attendance, progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils
  - literacy and numeracy catch-up funding has a positive impact on those pupils in Year 7 who need to improve their basic skills
  - leaders evaluate training for teachers in terms of its impact on pupils' progress
  - provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures good progress
  - pastoral middle leaders become more effective at improving attendance.
- Improve attendance across Years 7 to 11 by:
  - carefully evaluating the impact of the school's strategies for the improvement of attendance to determine which strategies are effective and which are not
  - challenging and supporting parents of pupils with high levels of absence to ensure that their child's attendance improves.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and middle-ability pupils make good progress by ensuring that teachers:
  - use assessment and other information to plan activities that are well matched to pupils' needs
  - plan lessons across all subjects that develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills
  - deploy teaching assistants so that their impact is consistently positive on pupils' progress
  - consistently tackle poor behaviour so that learning is not disrupted.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 29 November to 30 November 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors assessed the impact of leaders' actions taken since the last monitoring inspection, with particular focus on the areas for improvement relating to leadership and management, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare, and outcomes.

Meetings were held with the executive principal, the acting headteacher, the deputy headteachers, other leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with the chair and the vice-chair of the Sidney Stringer Multi-Academy Trust. Both are members of the interim executive board and the vice-chair of the trust is also the chair of the interim executive board.

The opinions of parents were considered through 60 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and by taking account of the views of a small number of parents who have contacted Ofsted about the school.

A meeting was held with a group of Year 7 pupils and inspectors also spoke to pupils informally. They observed behaviour during social times and in lessons.

Inspectors made short visits to a range of lessons in every year group. During these visits, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. Inspectors also examined the work in a sample of pupils' books.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including improvement plans and minutes of meetings of the interim executive board. Information about safeguarding and pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and welfare was also analysed.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of staffing changes. One member of the senior leadership team, two heads of department, two teachers and two learning support assistants have left the school. A deputy headteacher with responsibility for standards, two new heads of department, two teaching and learning consultants, two experienced teachers, four newly qualified teachers and four trainee teachers have joined the school.

In addition to five new learning support assistants, a leader and an assistant for the autism base and a leader and assistant for the alternative centre for education have joined the school's support staff. A new head of house and a member of support staff for the sixth form have also been appointed.

A member of the interim executive board has left this role and a replacement is due

to take up post in December 2017.

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

The acting headteacher, the executive headteacher, senior leaders, school staff and directors of the Sidney Stringer Multi-Academy Trust have continued to develop the more positive and ambitious culture that was evident at the time of the last monitoring inspection. Leaders and managers at all levels are raising expectations and improving the school.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are using this to drive improvements. The updated action plans are fit for purpose. Further strategies to address the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last full inspection and points raised during the previous monitoring inspection are in place.

Leadership capacity is developing and there is greater consistency throughout the school. New senior leaders and structures are beginning to become embedded and pastoral and subject leadership is improving. Clear accountability systems are now evident and performance management and staff training focus upon the school's priorities. Leaders are evaluating training for teachers in terms of its impact on pupils' progress.

The provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has improved further. This aspect of the school's work continues to be well led by the assistant headteacher with responsibility for inclusion. Purposeful and better-informed interventions are now in place and the SEN coordinator and new staff are having a positive impact. However, many of the changes are relatively new and the reshaping of provision is not complete. Consequently, outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not yet improving rapidly.

Pupil premium funding is being used more effectively. Improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils has a higher profile and the raising aspirations programme is having a positive impact. Staff know which pupils are supported by the pupil premium and these pupils are given additional responsibilities in class. Actions led by the assistant headteacher and the pupil premium champion are leading to improvements in progress, attendance and behaviour. However, staff are not consistently using the information that is available to them to plan activities to significantly improve the attainment of this group of pupils. Often, the targets set for disadvantaged pupils are not specific enough to help them make rapid progress.

The impact of literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is now carefully tracked. It is being used well to help pupils with low prior attainment in English and mathematics to improve their basic skills. As a result of tailored support and targeted interventions, many pupils are being helped to fill gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding. Catch-up funding is now having a positive impact on targeted pupils.

The pastoral system has improved. Pastoral leaders are taking effective action to improve attendance, behaviour and progress. Tutor time is now used far more productively and pupils have welcomed the house system.

Changes to the curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now more evident but pupils are unclear about fundamental British values. Leaders are aware that this aspect of the curriculum needs further development.

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

Teaching is improving and effective action has been taken to address the poor practice identified at the time of the last monitoring inspection. There has been a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching, and leaders have ensured that there is greater consistency. As a result, the quality of pupils' work, presentation and progress are all improving. Strategies such as 'exercise book expectations' and the five literacy non-negotiable rules are having a positive impact. Almost all staff are giving feedback in line with the school's assessment policy.

The new deputy headteacher has ensured that assessment information is carefully checked within the school and with other members of the trust. A greater proportion of staff are now using it effectively to inform their planning. It is also being used to set realistic but aspirational targets.

Pupils and staff enjoy positive relationships and staff know the pupils well. More teachers are using the information that is available to them to plan to meet the needs of pupils who have different starting points, so progress is improving. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are now beginning to benefit from the good practice that was evident in post-16 lessons at the time of the last inspection. However, inconsistencies remain.

Where teaching is less effective, staff do not use questions well or check understanding before moving learning on. They do not give pupils time to persevere with challenging tasks or process their thoughts to deepen their understanding. Whole-school strategies, such as 'stuck and challenge', are not used consistently and the quality of feedback and planning is variable. Some staff use the school's lesson planning format very well to consider the needs of different pupils but others do not use it as effectively to help them to make rapid progress.

There are some high-quality learning support assistants in the school. Where they have most impact, the teachers carefully deploy them. They support the learning of groups of pupils well but allow pupils to develop their independence. Where the teacher/learning support assistant agreement is used effectively, it helps to improve the progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, it is not used consistently.

At times, some learning support assistants do little to help pupils make good progress and others offer too much support. This does not lead to good progress. Leaders are aware that staff need further training to improve their practice, and plans are in place to work with the outstanding special school in the trust to address this issue.

There has been a strong focus on improving literacy since the previous monitoring inspection. Each department has a literacy advocate and examples of effective strategies to improve literacy are evident across the curriculum. However, some staff do not model the good use of spoken and written English and pupils are not routinely challenged to use sophisticated language when they speak.

Tutor time is now used much more productively to promote learning. Activities are well planned and resourced and support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. There is also a clear focus on developing literacy, and speaking and listening are actively encouraged. Where staff have taken full ownership of this programme, it is delivered very well. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching evident elsewhere in the curriculum are also apparent in tutor time.

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

As a result of effective strategies, attendance and punctuality continue to improve. However, absence remains higher than the national average and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are absent too often.

Behaviour is improving. There have been no permanent exclusions this term and pupils who find it hard to manage their own behaviour have been supported to improve their conduct. The new rewards system is valued by pupils and used well to recognise pupils who meet higher expectations. However, fixed-term exclusions have increased and a higher proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are excluded than other pupils.

Learning is disrupted infrequently but pupils become disengaged quickly if activities do not interest them. Behaviour at breaktime is still boisterous and staff do not consistently challenge pupils if they do not comply with school rules.

The promotion of personal development and welfare is becoming embedded across the curriculum and in tutor time. Pupils are given more opportunities to take responsibility, and a range of programmes, based on current research, are planned to address issues associated with well-being.

Pupils feel safe and one pupil told an inspector that 'school feels like a community'. Assemblies that promote the school's core values of respect, determination and kindness are helping pupils feel proud of their school, their community and

themselves.

Sixth-form pupils attend well and serve as positive role models to younger pupils. They are given a range of enrichment and leadership opportunities and many support activities that take place in tutor time. The head boy and head girl represent the school very well.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Outcomes for pupils are improving. Public examination results were better last year than the previous year and current pupils are making faster progress in a range of subjects.

In 2017, pupils made good progress in the sixth form and the school achieved a 100% pass rate at A level. Outcomes in fine art, mathematics and vocational subjects were particularly strong. However, AS-level results did not match A-level results and outcomes in information technology and physics were not as good as other subjects.

Year 11 results in 2017 reflected a slight improvement on the previous year. Progress improved and pupils from minority ethnic groups, those who speak English as an additional language and low prior-attaining pupils made faster progress than other groups. However, high prior-attaining pupils (particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils), middle-ability pupils, girls and White British pupils did not make fast enough progress.

Although disadvantaged pupils made improved progress and the difference between their attainment and the attainment of other pupils nationally diminished slightly, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are still not good enough. Similarly, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities made marginally improved progress but it was not fast enough.

Pupils in Year 11 did well in vocational subjects, such as performing arts, health and social care and construction, but outcomes in humanities and languages were poor. Additionally, pupils had made slow progress in English by the end of key stage 4 in 2017.

### **External support**

The Sidney Stringer Multi-Academy Trust continues to offer effective support and challenge to the school. Directors of the trust are highly skilled and they hold school leaders to account closely. They know the school well and their regular visits focus on the school's priorities. Detailed and accurate reports produced by directors help to inform action to improve the school. The trust has ensured that governance is strong.



