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Ms Alison Mander
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Mander

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grange Technology College

Following my visit with Barry Found, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Carl Sugden, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 March 2018, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gina White

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and accelerates the rate of pupils' progress in all subjects by ensuring that teachers:
 - make effective use of assessment information to match tasks to the needs of different groups of pupils, including the most able, those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disability and those who speak English as an additional language
 - ask questions that challenge pupils and deepen their thinking
 - provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and speaking skills in lessons, and particularly to write at greater length.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - sharpening development plans so they focus more on the specific impact of actions taken
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels more rigorously and systematically check the quality of teaching and provide teachers with helpful feedback
 - matching professional development activities more precisely to identified weaknesses in teachers' practice and checking that this results in improvements to teaching
 - making sure that all staff know who to go to if they have a concern about a pupil.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - ensuring that teaching stimulates and interests pupils so they are more fully engaged in learning
 - eliminating boisterous and aggressive behaviour at social times.
- Improve attendance by:
 - Ensuring that the school provides an enjoyable, relevant and interesting experience for pupils each day
 - reducing persistent absence.
- Improve 16 to 19 study programmes by:
 - ensuring that learners in key stage 4 are given the advice and guidance they need to make choices that match their planned next steps, and providing better careers guidance and support for university applications for sixth formers
 - improving the quality of teaching so that students make good progress in their

chosen study programmes

- ensuring that all students achieve at least a GCSE grade C in both English and mathematics
- raising levels of attendance
- listening to the views of students and increasing their involvement in a relevant and fulfilling enrichment programme that better develops their life skills.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 7 March 2018 to 8 March 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers and pupils. In addition, meetings were held with two representatives of the academy improvement board and the chief executive of the Southfield Grange multi-academy trust. A meeting was also held with a representative of Impact Education Trust that is providing support to the school. Inspectors observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' books and talked with them about their work in a range of year groups and subjects. Some visits to lessons were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work across a range of subjects in Years 9, 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Inspectors also read school leadership documents including those relating to self-evaluation, action plans and safeguarding.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in July 2017, the trust has filled the vacancy for a headteacher. New heads of department have been appointed in science and humanities, and a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is due to take up the role after Easter. Temporary arrangements are in place for leadership following the departure of the head of mathematics in December 2017. The school continues to be reliant on supply teachers to cover some unfilled vacancies and a high proportion of long-term absence due to ill health or maternity leave. Discussions regarding the school being re-brokered by another trust are continuing. School-to-school support from Guiseley School ended in autumn 2017, and Southfield Grange Trust has commissioned support from Impact Education Multi-Academy Trust and The Moorlands Academy Trust.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Under the headteacher's strategic guidance, the school is moving forwards despite the challenges in some areas of a lack of permanent staff. The programme of changes she leads are taking root in some key areas. Pupils are responding to higher expectations of their behaviour due to the constant attention and focus of all staff. Programmes introduced to improve pupils' reading are demonstrating impressive gains for those who regularly attend the sessions. Much improvement has been made to establish careers advice and guidance to sixth-form students since the previous monitoring report. Year 13 students are especially well supported to make informed decisions about their next steps. The need to better inform younger pupils, and especially those in Year 10 and 11, about career opportunities and their next steps is recognised in school development plans.

Ensuring consistency to the quality of teaching, in the face of the challenge of

managing staff absence, supply teachers and new leaders, is proving problematic. Much of the focus of the work to date has centred on tackling the weakest teaching, and providing training and support. This work has had some success in improving teachers' practice. The policies and procedures that the school has developed are beginning to be implemented, and the school is involving more middle leaders in monitoring activities. Some leaders are using these opportunities to reflect and recognise that improvements are required. However, monitoring is often too tightly focused on evaluating teachers' performance. This does not always yield enough useful information about the impact that teaching is having on pupils' learning to help to inform the school's next steps.

Self-review is developing across the school. It is heavily informed by external reports and information from the school's partners. The headteacher has begun to make changes to the curriculum, such as replacing the cross-curricular approach in Year 7 with specialist teaching of English, geography and history. In addition, many departments are planning to review programmes and schemes of work to strengthen progression and ensure that teaching makes appropriate intellectual, technical and creative demands of pupils. Leaders, several of whom are still getting to grips with new responsibilities following the recent restructure, are at early stages in using the information and data that the school collects to identify what is working well and why. Equally, leaders are not always identifying the reasons why learning is less effective for pupils and taking steps to plug these gaps.

Minutes of meetings reveal that the academy improvement board probes and challenges. The board has expressed reservations that tracking pupils' progress towards examination targets does not give it a clear enough view of pupils' current assessment. Tackling the inconsistency of assessment and tracking pupils' performance with more thoroughness are critical to the school successfully emerging from special measures.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching remains inconsistent across subjects, and within them. Senior and middle leaders are not complacent; they are determined to tackle weaknesses and they acknowledge that the pace of improvement needs to quicken.

The work, books and folders of pupils in key stage 4 and those following post-16 courses show that, for many of them, their knowledge, understanding of concepts and ability to apply their learning effectively to new contexts are poorly developed. Many pupils do not have basic information, such as a topic plan or an overview of their course or assessment criteria. Some pupils and students receive very little guidance and feedback about their work in mathematics, science and geography. Evidence of pupils acting on feedback about their work is also limited. However, pupils' work also shows stronger practice emerging, particularly in English and history. A rich dialogue around assessment between students and their teacher provides effective feedback and guidance in these subjects at A level. This helps to

promote progress for these students.

The use of assessment information by teachers to inform their planning and to match tasks to the needs of pupils remains inconsistent across a range of subjects and year groups. Inspectors saw examples of teachers using the information from recent assessments well to make sure that tasks were tailored to the needs of pupils and challenged them. Information was used effectively to support less-able pupils, but less so for more-able pupils who were undertaking work well within their capabilities. Some high-quality work was seen in Year 10 in mathematics as teachers used assessment and other information to make tasks bespoke to individual pupils. However, this was not typical or routine practice in many lessons seen.

The standards of presentation that the school has set are displayed prominently in pupils' books, but pupils do not always adhere to them. Scruffy and untidy work is unchallenged by some staff. Pockets of effective teaching and high-quality work by individual teachers were seen during this inspection. Pupils are well supported with resources and are developing a clearer understanding of language and how to use it in speech and a range of written forms in English. Questioning was used effectively in some lessons to develop and deepen pupils' thinking, but this feature was not consistent across departments. There was much to explain why results in English improved in 2017, and to show that similar developments are being sustained in the English department.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils behave well in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes. They socialise in small groups or work quietly together in study areas. There is friendly and positive interaction between pupils and staff and very good relationships, characterised by much warmth and good humour. Improvements to corridor systems at the changeover of lessons have helped to ease congestion, and pupils respond to staff encouraging them to move on to their next class. Pupils are aware of the higher expectations that the school has of them. They said that behaviour has improved greatly, for example, 'I don't look out of a classroom and see pupils wandering around like I used to.' They credit the headteacher's arrival with helping to bring this about. School information shows a reduction in disruption to lessons and the use of isolation. Records show a slight increase in the number of exclusions due to a specific incident last term. The school has applied exclusion reasonably and in line with requirements. Robust processes are in place to track, monitor and challenge absence and to follow up persistent absence and any instances of pupils who go missing from education. Nonetheless, attendance remains below the national average. This is an area that requires further work to focus on reducing the frequent absence that hinders a number of pupils, in all year groups, from making progress in their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes for sixth-form students and for Year 11 pupils showed modest improvement in 2017 but also showed that much remains to be done to tackle the legacy of underachievement that remains in the school. Progress by the end of key stage 4 continued to improve in English, science and languages. Pupils' progress in mathematics remained low compared to all schools nationally and especially so for the most able pupils. Pupils' progress in humanities declined further in 2017. The most able pupils made slower progress to that of similar groups nationally. Improvements in outcomes were due to the training of teachers and changes to teaching programmes. Where progress did not improve greatly, or declined, instability in staffing reduced the impact of this work especially in mathematics and humanities.

The school's assessment data of pupils currently in the school suggests an improving picture across subjects and for some groups of pupils, such as those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities in Years 7 and 8. Carefully targeted programmes of additional support are enabling pupils in Years 7 and 8 to catch up in reading. Some pupils have made rapid progress over the last six months, and a few pupils have gained up to 24 to 30 months' increase in their reading age. Consistent attendance on these programmes is critical to pupils' success.

Inconsistency in the checks on pupils' learning results in some pupils' work not being assessed. Inspectors' checks on a sample of books in Years 9, 10 and 11 found that over a third of pupils have stayed at the same level, or declined, this academic year. These checks also found that some assessments were over-generous.

External support

The trust has acted quickly to ensure a network of advice, training and leadership support from good schools and national leaders of education, and governance is available to assist leaders as they make the necessary improvements. These specialists and experts are working in partnership with the school's senior and middle leaders to develop and strengthen teaching, learning, assessment and governance through specific actions. However, the plans to guide this work do not include measures and criteria by which leaders and governors can judge the effectiveness and value for money of this work.