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

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ernesford Grange Community Academy

Following my visit with Bernice Astling, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 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 third 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.

I am of the opinion that the school 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 third monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 March 2018

Evidence

Inspectors assessed the impact of leaders' actions taken since the last monitoring inspection. The particular focus was on the areas for improvement relating to: leadership and management; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare; and outcomes. The sixth form was not a focus of this visit.

Meetings were held with the executive principal, the acting headteacher, the deputy headteachers, other leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with two members of the interim executive board (IEB), who are also directors of the multi-academy trust.

The opinions of parents were considered through the 14 responses to Parent View. The lead inspector also reviewed the 81 responses to the school's own parent questionnaire, which used the same questions as Parent View.

Meetings were held with a group of Year 11 pupils and with pupils who attend the school's alternative centre for education. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally and observed behaviour during social time and in lessons. Short visits were made to a range of lessons in key stages 3 and 4. During these visits, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. Inspectors also examined a sample of Year 7 pupils' books.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and minutes of meetings of the IEB. Information about safeguarding and pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and welfare was also analysed.

Context

Since the last inspection one permanent teacher and one supply teacher have left the school. One of the special educational needs coordinators (SENCo) left in March 2018 and an assistant SENCo has been appointed. A new associate head of modern foreign languages, a newly qualified teacher of Spanish and a long-term supply teacher of science started in January 2018.

An internal member of the teaching staff has been promoted to the role of assistant headteacher and will take up this post in April 2018.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher has continued to take effective action to improve the school. Aably supported by the executive headteacher, senior leaders, staff and directors of the trust, she has further developed the positive and ambitious

culture that was evident at the time of previous monitoring inspections.

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are using this information to take effective action in relation to the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last full inspection. They are also developing other areas of the school appropriately.

New leaders are adding capacity and new systems are being embedded. However, not all middle leaders have secured the required improvements within their areas of responsibility. For example, leaders in humanities and modern foreign languages have not brought about sustained improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress over time in their subject areas.

Staff value the professional development opportunities that are available to them in the school and through the trust. Newly qualified and trainee teachers are well supported and more experienced members of staff benefit from high-quality training that is tailored to meet their needs.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is firmly embedded within the curriculum. Leaders have also taken effective action to develop pupils' understanding of fundamental British values. Input during tutor time, focus days and assemblies has led to pupils being able to talk confidently about, and explore issues related to, tolerance, respect, the rule of law, democracy and individual liberty.

Enrichment activities, such as 'The Great Ernesford Bake Off' and a Year 11 revision residential visit to north Wales are enhancing the learning that takes place in the classroom. Pupils are also benefiting from improved careers education. Leaders have responded well to national initiatives and plans are in place to develop this area of the school's work further.

Additional funding, including Year 7 catch-up funding, is used effectively. Pupil premium funding has been used for tailored and targeted action that has led to improvements in attendance, behaviour and, to a lesser extent, progress. It contributed to individual successes but it is yet to have a marked impact on the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

The assistant headteacher with responsibility for inclusion has continued to take effective action to improve the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. A range of targeted interventions are in place and there is a greater focus on learning within the different settings in the school. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making improved progress but it still does not match the progress made by other pupils in the school.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff, including new staff, are well trained and clear procedures to help pupils stay safe are used consistently.

Concerns are followed up tenaciously and local issues are covered appropriately within staff training and through the curriculum. The single central record is compliant with statutory requirements.

Directors of the Sidney Stringer Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) and members of the IEB provide effective governance. They proactively use their range of skills and experience to offer appropriate support and challenge. Leaders are held to close account for improving the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

As a result of the effective and tailored training programme, the quality of teaching has continued to improve. Most teachers are passionate about their subjects and know the pupils well. Staff use their positive relationships with the pupils to help them learn more effectively. Praise, targeted questions, precise feedback, and clear next steps are often used well to help pupils make better progress.

Planning has improved. Staff are using the information sheets about each class more effectively to help them meet the needs of different pupils. Whole-school developments such as 'the four-part lesson' and 'stuck and challenge' are now being used more consistently to improve the quality of learning. During the inspection, high-quality teaching was evident in a number of areas, including design and technology, and English.

Where teaching is most effective, staff have high expectations of the pupils, clear routines are established, and whole-school initiatives are used well to help pupils learn. However, inconsistencies remain. Where teaching has less impact, time is not used well; expectations, particularly of the most able pupils, are not high enough; and staff focus on getting through the content of a topic rather than deepening knowledge and skills.

School-based alternative provision is more focused on learning and there is greater clarity about the role of learning support assistants (LSA). The LSA agreements are now being used more effectively to ensure that LSAs are having a greater impact on the learning of targeted pupils. However, inconsistencies remain and LSAs are not always deployed in a way that helps them to improve the progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Numeracy across the curriculum is not promoted well but literacy continues to be developed effectively in a range of subjects. For example, initiatives such as the 'talking toolkit' are helping to improve literacy. However, the impact of such strategies are limited because some staff are still not modelling the use of good spoken English or challenging pupils to use sophisticated language when responding to teachers' questions. Leaders are aware that this is an area that needs to improve further.

Improvements in the use of tutor time have continued. Purposeful activities are planned to help pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British values and improve their literacy, numeracy and communication skills. However, inconsistencies in the quality of delivery remain.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have established a new norm of positive behaviour. Pupils who spoke to inspectors believe that behaviour is improving and they have no concerns about bullying. Their views are supported by school records, which show that the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour have reduced considerably.

Pupils usually behave well in class. However, when teaching does not engage them, they lose concentration and talk among themselves. Additionally, pupils' presentation of work varies between subjects and a few pupils do not bring the correct equipment to lessons. Some pupils do not take enough responsibility for their learning.

Behaviour during social time continues to improve but staff still do not consistently challenge inappropriate behaviour inside the school building. During breaktime it is noisy in the school canteen and some pupils continue to behave in a boisterous manner.

Although exclusions are declining, they remain above the national average. Leaders are also aware that higher proportions of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and of disadvantaged pupils are excluded than others. This remains an area for improvement.

Informed interventions are leading to improved behaviour, attitudes to learning, and attendance for targeted pupils. However, although improving, attendance remains below the national average. Absence is too high for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils in key stage 4.

Outcomes for pupils

Current pupils, particularly in Years 7 and 8, are making improved progress. However, as a result of poor teaching in the past, pupils in key stage 4 still have gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Year 10 and 11 pupils are also making slower progress in humanities and modern foreign languages than they are in other subjects. In many subjects throughout the school, girls are making faster progress than boys. Although improving, the progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and by disadvantaged pupils does not match that of others in the school.

External support

The Sidney Stringer MAT continues to offer high-quality support and challenge to the school. This has helped to strengthen leadership, develop teaching and improve pupils' progress.