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10 May 2018

Mr Tom Ashley  
Headteacher  
Balby Carr Community Academy  
Weston Road  
Balby  
Doncaster  
South Yorkshire  
DN4 8ND

Dear Mr Ashley

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Balby Carr Community Academy**

Following my visit with Erica Hiorns, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 April 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 April 2017. 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 school may appoint newly qualified teachers; however, not in science.

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

Yours sincerely

Darren Stewart  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, so that it is at least consistently good to enable all groups of pupils to achieve well, by ensuring that:
  - staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - teachers use assessment information effectively to plan work that matches pupils' needs and abilities, including the most able pupils, and challenges them to make good progress
  - questioning is used skilfully to check pupils' learning and to deepen understanding
  - teachers provide sufficient guidance to help pupils attain a good standard of work
  - pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their literacy and mathematical skills across subjects
  - the pace of learning is effective for pupils to gain good knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Urgently improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by ensuring that:
  - there is a rapid reduction in pupils' absence so that pupils' safety is assured and opportunities for learning are not missed
  - pupils arrive punctually to school and to lessons
  - improvements in behaviour are secured quickly to reduce the high levels of exclusion and enable all pupils to feel safe
  - school leaders take action to eradicate persistent low-level disruption in class
  - pupils take pride in their work and develop good attitudes to learning
  - pupils treat each other and adults with respect at all times.
- Improve the effectiveness of the sixth form by ensuring that:
  - students make consistently good progress across a wide range of subjects, especially academic subjects
  - greater opportunities are provided for students to contribute to their studies through independent learning skills
  - a greater proportion of students continue their studies to full completion
  - there is increased recruitment, especially from the school's Year 11 pupils.
- Swiftly improve the impact of leadership, including governance and the multi-

academy trust, by making sure that:

- safeguarding procedures are effective and all staff are knowledgeable about all aspects of child protection and keeping children safe in school
- all senior leaders and subject leaders are thorough in checking the quality of teaching and learning so that they have an accurate view of the performance of the school and subject areas
- effective use is made of the pupil premium funding and special educational needs funding to ensure that learning and behaviour are at least good for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- senior leaders and subject leaders ensure that teachers follow the school's policy for marking, feedback and assessment
- middle leaders make sure that teachers consistently apply the school's behaviour policy to eradicate low-level disruption in class and improve conduct around the school
- teachers and leaders are held to account through a rigorous performance management system
- the curriculum is well taught across a wide range of subjects, especially English and mathematics, to make sure that pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education
- work across the curriculum leads to positive attitudes to learning and strengthens pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- the multi-academy trust and governors challenge and support the school more effectively to ensure that the overall effectiveness of the school improves.

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 third monitoring inspection on 24 to 25 April 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a wide range of subjects and year groups; most were joint observations with leaders. Inspectors scrutinised documents, including the school's improvement plan and statement of action. They also scrutinised the school's single central record and documents relating to behaviour, attendance, teaching and learning and current pupils' assessment information. Inspectors also carried out a work scrutiny from a range of pupils and abilities across a variety of different subject areas. Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a range of middle leaders and groups of staff and pupils. Discussions were also held with the chief executive officer (CEO) from Astrea Academy Trust, and representatives from the interim management committee and the national leader of governance (NLG) who is working with leaders in the school. A telephone conversation also took place with the interim CEO of Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT).

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit in January 2018, the agreed sponsor continues to be Astrea Academy Trust. The CEO and other leaders, within Astrea Academy Trust, have provided extensive and beneficial support to the headteacher both on an operational and strategic level. There continue to be some issues around staffing, although the headteacher continues to monitor this so that such issues are not adversely affecting the education of pupils.

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

Your continuing ambition to improve standards and experiences for pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form remains resolute. Despite various challenges, you have taken decisive action so that senior leaders are held more robustly to account for the impact of their work. As a result, the pace of change is improving and there are incremental and modest improvements. These improvements demonstrate that the school is back on track to improve the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and attendance in line with the timescales set in the school's improvement plan.

You and other leaders are now in a position to more readily use the school improvement plan as a useful tool to monitor, measure and review the impact of actions taken to improve areas of the school. The school improvement plan is now complemented by a statement of action that is deemed fit for purpose. The statement of action has been overhauled and, because of this, it is a precise and incisive document. It is contextualised to the school, the strengths that exist and the areas that need the most development and attention.

Since the previous monitoring visit, Astrea Academy Trust has effectively, and appropriately, deployed leaders and support to the school. As a result, leadership capacity has substantially improved and this is providing you with necessary support and challenge.

There is now an Interim Local Committee in place. Members of this group are highly skilled and are providing very effective and much needed, and valued, support and challenge to you and other leaders. They are ambitious for the school and its development and they are focusing on strategies to improve the quality of teaching and to address areas such as attendance, which is proving stubborn.

You and leaders within Astrea Academy Trust have initiated another review of the use of the pupil premium funding. As a result, there is now a strategic plan in place to improve the experiences and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Training for staff has also been beneficial. For example, some teachers are using information about pupil premium pupils more readily to target them when questioning, so that they clearly demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. This was particularly the case in geography, English and in some mathematics lessons observed. However, leaders acknowledge that current priorities continue to focus on the use of pupil information by staff to inform planning so that activities are appropriate and meet the varying needs of pupils, and engagement in lessons is improved.

Leaders' focus on improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils demonstrates that you and other leaders are well aware of areas that need the most attention. Scheduled monitoring of the quality of teaching through, for example, learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work is providing you and other leaders with valuable information to address any areas of underperformance. As a result of this monitoring, weaker teaching is being addressed quickly and appropriate support put in place.

You and other leaders continue to review the school's assessment procedures. While you acknowledge that there is still work to do on this important area, there is a concerted effort by all to ensure that pupils' assessments and assessment information are accurate and of a high quality so that teachers' planning improves.

Middle leaders confirm that they are receiving, and benefiting from, more effective support. They now show a clear understanding about what is expected of them. They benefit from being involved in teaching and learning groups and working with other colleagues to support, discuss and share good practice. Staff would also support this view and are appreciative of the support and guidance they receive from middle and senior leaders.

Middle leaders value sharing their views at extended leadership team meetings and they feel as though their views are having a positive impact on bringing about much needed change. Middle leaders evidently demonstrate high expectations for their teams and the pupils. However, they acknowledge that this remains inconsistent as

they continue to develop their skills to support and challenge staff and develop further their skills in monitoring the quality and impact of the teaching in their subject areas. There is a developing sense of collaboration and commitment among middle leaders to improve the quality of outcomes for pupils.

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

There has been a much stronger focus on the professional development and training of staff since the previous monitoring visit. These opportunities focus on improving the quality of teaching, particularly around questioning and meeting the needs of groups of pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils and the most able. Staff appreciate such opportunities and they appreciate being able to share ideas and good practice.

Teachers' planning is becoming increasingly effective so that pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills develop. Where planning is most effective, teachers are planning activities that allow pupils to develop, extend and consolidate ideas. For example, this was evident in learning sampled in Year 10 mathematics, and Year 8 geography and English. Pupils told inspectors that when their teacher challenges them they enjoy their learning more. However, there continue to be some teachers whose expectations are not high enough and planned activities do not expect enough of pupils. This was particularly evident in science.

The 'engagement task' continues to be a valuable and well-used strategy to engage pupils in their learning. In the main, it is being used effectively by most staff to tap into pupils' prior learning and extend their knowledge and understanding. Where it is having the most impact, for example in Year 9 drama, it is a basis to challenge pupils' thinking and extend their ideas and understanding of key concepts.

Teachers' skills in questioning effectively vary across the school. This is because some teachers simply question to gauge a basic understanding of an idea or concept. However, where questioning is stronger it is because the teacher insists on a more developed or extended response from pupils. For example, this skilful questioning was observed in English, mathematics, drama and geography. Where questioning is stronger, high expectations of what pupils can achieve permeate the classroom.

Although the quality of teaching is improving, it continues to be variable across the school. You and other leaders are rightly concerned about this, as some pupils are not being given appropriate, planned, opportunities to regain lost ground in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Although, with this said, you and other leaders are well aware that more needs to be done to secure these improvements at a faster pace and have clear plans in place to do so. There are clear signs that there is now the capacity to improve teaching further.

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

A more focused and collaborative approach by leaders and staff is providing a more systematic approach to monitoring pupils' attendance. This has led to some marginal improvements in pupils' attendance, particularly for those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The awareness of how important attending school is among pupils continues to be raised throughout the school. This is particularly evident in the sixth form, where students' attendance in both Year 12 and Year 13 remains high. However, you and other leaders acknowledge that overall attendance, particularly disadvantaged pupils' attendance, remains a stubborn issue that must continue to improve at a more urgent pace as good attendance is crucial in improving pupils' outcomes.

Pupils' behaviour is showing signs of improvement. The site is calm and orderly and during movement and social times most pupils behave appropriately and maturely; for example, queuing in an orderly fashion for lunch. Pupils continue to be well supervised and this adds to the calm and orderly environment being embedded within the school. Incidents of poor behaviour are reducing as pupils become aware, further, of the school's increased expectations, consequences system and staff becoming more effective and consistent in applying the system. However, there are still some pupils who show very poor attitudes and, as a consequence, spoil the learning for others. You acknowledge that fixed-term exclusions remain, worryingly, far too high. You and other leaders continue to work with pupils, parents and other agencies in an attempt to reduce them. However, these are not reducing as quickly as they need to. This will be a focus at the next monitoring visit.

Pupils and students, in the main, feel safe and can explain how to stay safe at school and outside of school, particularly around the use of social media. Pupils acknowledge that bullying does take place in the school. However, most are confident that staff will deal with their concerns in a timely and effective manner.

Safeguarding processes and practices continue to be increasingly effective. For example, referrals made are timely and appropriate, records of incidents are much more detailed, with information regarding outcomes and follow-up actions of specific incidents. Staff training is beneficial and regular. Staff show an appropriate level of knowledge as they explain the signs of different abuse, and what to do should a safeguarding incident occur. Leaders have recently initiated an audit of the site, fire procedures and health and safety practices to further improve safeguarding practice. While processes and practices are improving, the culture of safeguarding is yet to be embedded across the whole school.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Since the previous monitoring visit, standards have shown some incremental sign of improvement. You and other leaders are well aware that, historically, outcomes for pupils have been in the doldrums because of weaker teaching, and pupils' low



attendance. However, as a result of current actions to improve both the quality of teaching and attendance of pupils, current pupils' gains in knowledge, understanding and skills are steadily improving, particularly in Year 10.

Using current pupil assessment information from recent mock examinations, you and your assistant headteacher with responsibility for pupils' progress and outcomes have prioritised, currently, additional support for Year 11 pupils so that their needs are increasingly met. This is in an attempt to address their gaps in knowledge and understanding. Current assessment information, provided by leaders, indicates that current Year 11 pupils' outcomes are highly variable but show promise in art, design technology and health and social care. There are modest improvements in the proportion of pupils set to achieve a standard pass in English and mathematics. Standards in science continue to be a concern and inspection evidence would indicate that current pupils in Year 11 and some other year groups are underachieving in this core subject. However, you and other leaders are committed to providing various opportunities in an attempt to boost the level of pupils' attainment. Current support for pupils, such as additional opportunities in English and mathematics, is having some positive impact, for example.

Current Year 13 students are achieving increasingly well and those students spoken to during the inspection feel ready and prepared for their forthcoming examinations. Leaders acknowledge that they must continue this momentum up until the summer examinations so that students have every opportunity to achieve what they are capable of.

The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities still lags behind others nationally. Teachers are not consistently planning to meet their varying needs.

Despite some improvements in teaching, the remaining variability and inconsistencies within subjects are leading to pupils making variable progress. There are some marginal improvements in achievement throughout Years 8 and 9, but these are from low starting points because of historically weak teaching. However, you and other leaders are resolute in your determination to face the challenges that lie ahead head-on so that teaching and outcomes improve.

### **External support**

The school is receiving valuable support from Astrea Academy Trust, on an operational and strategic level. Doncaster local authority has provided beneficial support to leaders around improving safeguarding processes, behaviour and attendance. An NLG is also providing much needed support, guidance and advice to the school so that the governance structure in place provides appropriate challenge to leaders.

All of this support has been effective in providing opportunities for leaders to

develop their skills further and increase capacity for school improvement.

WCAT has provided financial investment in the school recently to improve some facilities, particularly for Year 7 pupils.