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Mr Steven Kneller
Hanham Woods Academy
Memorial Road
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Dear Mr Kneller

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hanham Woods Academy

Following my visit with Sarah McGinnis, Her Majesty's Inspector, Stuart Wilson, Ofsted Inspector, and Trudi Baker, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 23–24 May 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 academy'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 October 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 improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2017.

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - making sure that teachers have the highest expectations of pupils
 - improving the accuracy of assessment of pupils' work and ensuring that pupils understand clearly how well they are achieving in relation to challenging targets
 - giving pupils clear explanations of what they are to learn and how they will achieve success
 - providing well-planned work for pupils, particularly boys and the most able pupils, which challenges them academically and helps them make better progress.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - insisting that all teachers apply the school's behaviour policy in a robust and consistent way
 - making sure, through the strengthening of teaching, that all pupils take pride in their work and are motivated to succeed
 - continuing to work with pupils, parents and other agencies to raise pupils' attendance to at least the national average.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - rapidly establishing better communication between the school and parents
 - improving the effectiveness of senior leaders' actions to develop literacy skills across the school
 - developing the precision of middle leaders' evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of their departments based on accurate assessment information
 - ensuring that middle leaders use training opportunities in other schools within the trust to improve their leadership skills and so achieve rapid improvement in teaching in their subject areas
 - making sure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to help these pupils make rapid progress.

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

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how the aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 23 May 2018 to 24 May 2018

Evidence

During this inspection, inspectors visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' books to monitor learning together with senior leaders. They examined school documents and met with the principal, the executive principal, the trust's school improvement team leader, the chief executive officer (CEO) and chair of the trust. They met with senior and middle leaders, a group of staff and groups of pupils. They also took account of Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, and a phone call from a parent.

Context

There have been a significant number of changes to the school's middle leadership team since the inspection. These include changes to the leadership of mathematics, English and the special educational needs team. Some of these changes are ongoing. The leadership team will not be finally in place until September. There has also been a substantial number of changes to the teaching staff. Currently, there are a number of temporary teachers.

The trust has reorganised its sixth-form provision. There is no longer any sixth-form teaching at Hanham Woods Academy.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The principal has acted with appropriate speed and robustness to begin to tackle the weaknesses highlighted in the inspection report. He and his leadership team have an accurate picture of the school's weaknesses and they have drawn up detailed plans to address them. At the time of the inspection in October, the majority of the senior team were new in post. The principal has worked well with them since then to build an effective senior leadership that can move the school forward. He is also strengthening his middle leadership team.

The trust has, rightly, made improving the school one of its highest priorities. School leaders have benefited from the challenge and support of the trust. There is a rigorous and well understood accountability process that holds the principal and the academy council (local governing body) to account. Trustees are well informed and ask challenging questions. Their scrutiny is regular and thorough. The recommended review of governance has taken place. However, the completed report has not yet been received.

The quality of middle leadership is improving. The principal has made clear to middle leaders what he expects and they are responding well to this increased scrutiny. Middle leaders now have regular meetings with line managers and school improvement staff from the trust. Middle leaders know what to do and there is a genuine sense of gathering momentum. Nonetheless, the impact of their work in

improving teaching, learning and assessment is at an early stage. It is inconsistent and not embedded.

The inspection report highlighted the need to improve the school's communication with parents and carers. Leaders have been open and transparent in the aftermath of the special measures judgement and they invited parents in to school to listen and lay out their plans. They have followed this up with an increased emphasis on sharing news with parents. They have also been more proactive in reaching out to parents of disadvantaged pupils. However, some parents still do not feel that when they contact the school with an issue, their concerns are addressed promptly enough.

The last inspection recommended a review of the effectiveness of support for disadvantaged pupils. This has been booked in but has not yet been completed. In the interim, leaders have strengthened their approach to supporting this group of pupils. There are strategies in place to support pupils that focus on improving their attendance and their attitudes to learning. However, leaders are not currently evaluating the effectiveness of their strategy with sufficient rigour.

Leaders have begun to address low standards of literacy. A whole-school approach to literacy has been developed and is in place. However, teachers are not implementing it with any consistency. Consequently, it is not yet having the impact leaders require. This is a major challenge for leaders and teachers if standards are to rise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching that pupils experience remains too inconsistent and so they cannot make the progress they are capable of. However, it is beginning to show signs of improvement in some areas. In English, for example, expectations are rising. Pupils say that teachers have different expectations of them in different subject areas. In some subjects there is an emphasis on completing work to a good standard and having a pride in its presentation, while in others this is not the case. This confuses pupils and frustrates them.

Leaders have provided a significant amount of training for teachers to improve teaching, learning and assessment. They have worked hard to present a coherent model of learning that will act as the central feature of teaching at the school. This is beginning to have an effect. Staff and pupils are developing a shared language about learning. Pupils are beginning to be able to discuss what they are learning and why. There is a long way to go, however, before this is embedded across the school and so improves the progress that pupils make.

Teachers are raising their expectations of pupils of average ability and this is having a positive impact. However, expectations of the most able pupils are still too low. These pupils often do not feel challenged by the work they are given. On the occasions they are given opportunities to show what they can do, they respond

enthusiastically.

The quality of assessment has improved in a number of aspects but is still deficient in others. The trust and school leaders have ensured that there is a good structure in place to monitor and track the progress that pupils make over time. The trust has developed strong systems to check on the accuracy of teachers' judgements. It is also able to use its resources to set standardised assessments across all its schools. This is a powerful tool in checking on progress. However, teachers are not yet using their assessments of what pupils can and cannot do with sufficient precision to guide their teaching and so make the most use of it. School leaders have also set an expectation that pupils will reflect on the feedback they are given by teachers and correct or improve their work. This is not currently effective because many teachers are not giving precise enough feedback, nor are they giving pupils the time to reflect on and improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have acted decisively to address poor behaviour across the school. The number of exclusions and incidents of poor behaviour has fallen significantly. The atmosphere in lessons and at lunchtimes and lesson changeovers is calm and orderly. There has been a sharp focus by leaders and teachers on expecting pupils to be 'ready to learn'. Pupils welcome the clarity of the school's approach and they report that they can now focus on their learning in lessons without constant interruptions.

Pupils still take little pride in their work. Teachers are not consistent in their expectations, and pupils only do their best where teachers insist on high standards. When teachers allow them to, pupils' work is regularly completed carelessly or is incomplete.

School leaders have recently revised their approach to attendance. This is having a positive impact and attendance is improving. However, it remains below the national average for the year as a whole. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are still absent too regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils are beginning to show better progress than in previous years. However, improvement is far from consistent or sustained. It is at its best in English. Here, leaders and teachers, working with staff from the trust, have successfully raised the quality of teaching. The result is that pupils in all year groups are making better progress. This is not the case in other subjects, notably mathematics and science. This is partially because school leaders have not been able to create a full team of subject specialists. This has resulted in some pupils making very little progress during the course of the year.

External support

The school works with others in the local authority to challenge and support each other to raise standards. At a recent meeting, the CEO presented a case study outlining improvements in exclusion and attendance data following concerns raised by other school leaders. This approach is in its early days and there is little evidence of impact to date.

The vast majority of support the school receives is from the trust. The school receives a substantial degree of additional resources to strengthen its leadership and improve its teaching. The trust's school improvement team coaches and supports middle leaders and teachers to improve their skills. There is evidence that this has had an impact in English in particular. In other areas, for example mathematics, the impact is not as effective. The trust has also provided a significant degree of support to improve the assessment of pupils' work. As a result of this work, middle leaders have much more comprehensive and robust measures of progress, and this is allowing them to target their efforts more precisely. However, in spite of the work that has been undertaken, trust leaders know that they have not yet had the impact on teaching, learning and assessment across the school that they expect. This is their next challenge.