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Mrs Kirsty Jones  
Headteacher  
Willenhall E-ACT Academy  
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Willenhall  
West Midlands  
WV12 4BD

Dear Mrs Jones

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Willenhall E-ACT Academy**

Following my visit with Sarah Godden, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 10–11 July 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 March 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 (NQTs). I would ask that I am informed of any decisions that may result in the appointment of NQTs before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Act with urgency to ensure that all pupils are safe at the school by:
  - addressing pupils' poor behaviour through insisting on their adherence to school expectations and gaining the full support of their parents
  - ensuring all staff implement the school's behaviour management policy consistently and effectively, and that this policy offers suitable sanctions and appropriate support and rewards to pupils
  - improving the attendance of pupils, including those in alternative provision, through analysing strategies which have been successful previously, intervening early and working more closely with parents
  - ensuring that pupils receive high-quality information in lessons, and through the pastoral system, that enables them to recognise, avoid and deal with potentially dangerous situations.
- Ensure that the extra funding the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well to raise their achievement rapidly.
- Improve the impact of leadership, including governance, by:
  - becoming more precise in setting and reviewing actions and using this information rigorously for further improvement
  - meeting the statutory duty to deliver careers education, information, advice and guidance, and ensure that those pupils who have currently missed out have additional opportunities to acquire this support
  - check that communication with parents and the publication of information on the website meets statutory requirements
  - ensuring that senior and middle leaders are fully accountable for the necessary and urgent improvements required in safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and achievement.
- Improve the quality of the 16 to 19 study programme by analysing and improving the assessment system and outcomes for learners following academic courses.
- Improve teaching at key stages 3 and 4 so that outcomes improve rapidly by:
  - embedding a coherent teaching strategy which is applied consistently throughout the school
  - ensuring teaching staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - setting pupils learning tasks which they understand, are suitably challenging, and that capture their attention so concentration does not diminish.

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

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 10 July 2018 to 11 July 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed pupils' learning in key stage 3 and 4 lessons across a wide range of subjects. No key stage 5 lessons were observed because students have completed their studies and examinations. Inspectors were accompanied by school leaders on some of these visits. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in class and evaluated a separate sample of books. Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons and at break and lunchtime.

Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders. A range of documents was evaluated, including leaders' self-evaluation and action plans, their recent analysis of assessment information and information about behaviour and attendance. Pupils met formally with inspectors on two occasions and shared their views during informal discussions at social times. An inspector also met with a representative of the trust who sponsor the school and are responsible for governance.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, three additional assistant headteachers have been appointed to further increase the capacity of the senior leadership team. Following these appointments, there have been some changes to the roles of the team. For example, the school's deputy headteacher has very recently taken on responsibility for strategies to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Some teachers will be leaving the school at the end of this term. New appointments have been secured from teachers new to the profession and those with more experience. Leaders expect the school to be fully staffed at the start of the new school year.

Leaders have recently made the decision to suspend the school's sixth-form provision for September 2018. Year 11 pupils who were interested in returning to the school as sixth-form students have been supported well in securing alternative offers for places, for example in nearby schools that offer the combination of subjects they are interested in studying.

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

The leadership of teaching and learning is strong, and regular monitoring of teaching takes place. Leaders use this information well to develop a clear strategy to build on the improvements in teaching since the last inspection. There remain inconsistencies in the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies between different subject areas. This contributes to the variation in outcomes between

subjects, and for different groups of pupils.

Since the previous monitoring inspection there has been further clarification of the roles and responsibilities of leadership of SEN provision. Senior leaders have introduced more robust processes to identify accurately pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This information is being used to create informative individual support plans (ISPs) which include the views of parents and pupils. ISPs provide teachers with a range of classroom-based strategies that address specific learning needs. Teachers are now better informed about how to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, this information has only recently been shared so is not yet reflected in how well teachers approach meeting pupils' needs in lessons. Senior leaders have established processes to review detailed information about how well pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are doing individually and as a group. As a result, they can evaluate and determine in detail the effectiveness of interventions in place to support learning. Additional, specific support for these pupils away from their peers is proving effective, for example in improving pupils' skills in reading. However, leaders' monitoring information shows that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in many year groups continue to make less progress within the curriculum than their peers. Plans are being developed to tackle this.

There has been recent strengthening in the senior leadership responsibility for disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders have begun to measure and evaluate the impact of current strategies used to address identified barriers to learning. It is clear that some planned interventions have not been effective. For example, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains too low. Leaders recognise that the differences in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing, but slowly and not consistently. For example, faster rates of progress are evident in English and humanities than in science and in some option subjects. However, academic coaching has proven to be effective, and the attainment of Year 11 disadvantaged pupils is showing a marked improvement.

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

Leaders' expectations for lesson routines and structures are being used regularly by teachers. Pupils now expect these routines, which provide a regular rhythm to their lessons. However, in some lessons teachers are not using ongoing assessment information about how well pupils are doing to adapt their plans to respond to pupils' learning. As a result, pupils who are ready to move on to more challenging work do not consistently get the opportunity to do so. Similarly, pupils who require additional support or time on a task may be moved on before they are fully ready.

Some teachers make effective use of examples of work or model how to approach tasks, so pupils understand what they must do. Teachers also make sure that there is a strong focus on subject-specific terminology. This is most effective when teachers make sure that pupils understand the concepts associated with specialist language and can use this well in their answers. In lessons where tasks are

provided which are more challenging and planned to extend learning, teachers sometimes provide too much support and structure, which reduces the level of demand. Teachers tend to help pupils out rather than supporting them to find their own solutions when they encounter problems with their learning. This provides fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their resilience.

Pupils say that their learning has improved since the last inspection, and they value the positive relationships they have with their teachers. There are still some issues with gaps in pupils' knowledge due to the legacy of previous poor teaching and frequent changes of teachers. This contributes to limits to pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers have been working hard to address these issues. Actions taken have had most benefit for younger pupils. Pupils take pride in their work and exercise books are often very well presented.

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

The culture and ethos of the school continue to become more positive. This is most apparent in pupils' experiences of their time at school. They talk about the range of extra-curricular opportunities that are available, including sports and performing arts clubs. Pupils are involved in democratic processes through the school council, and contribute positively to the development of the school. For example, recent fundraising for charities supported causes selected by pupils which are close to their hearts. There are an increasing number of opportunities to develop pupils' sense of responsibility and leadership. For example, a number of pupils are trained as mental health ambassadors to support the welfare of their peers. Pupils are increasingly proud to be part of the Willenhall E-ACT Academy community.

Leaders responsible for behaviour, work closely with those responsible for other aspects of pupils' personal development and welfare. This results in a coordinated and holistic approach to improving pupils' behaviour. Strategies continue to have a positive impact. For example, there continues to be a term-by-term reduction in the proportion of pupils who are excluded from school for a fixed period of time, although these still remain higher than the national average. Exclusions are used in response to specific incidents and to reinforce leaders' expectations of the school's sanctions process. The number of pupils removed from lessons during the day due to conduct issues has also continued to reduce. The number of reward points that pupils receive from their teachers keeps on rising in response to improved conduct and work.

Pupils' attendance continues to show signs of improvement. However, overall attendance has only improved slightly over the last year and remains lower than national levels. Attendance of different groups of pupils remains variable. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities now attend more regularly than before, but strategies to support the attendance of disadvantaged pupils have had a limited effect so far. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has shown a more marked improvement over the year. Leaders are not complacent about pupils'

attendance and use a variety of approaches to address this, for example arranging access to transport, rewards for pupils whose attendance improves and enforcement of sanctions, if required. Senior leaders are mindful about the safety and welfare of pupils who are absent for a long period of time and carry out the necessary checks. Leaders involve external agencies where appropriate. For example, the local authority has been notified about those pupils who are due to start at school in September but have not been reached by leaders. Pupils understand the importance of attendance, and the links between absence and reduced learning time. Weekly rewards are highly motivational, and pupils told inspectors that 'sweet Friday' is extremely popular.

Pupils' conduct around the school site is orderly and calm. Pupils respond to staff instructions, but these do need to be repeated on some occasions. Pupils comment positively about the improvements in conduct at the school. They note that staff hold them to account for their actions, and that staff are increasingly consistent in how they use the school's rewards and sanctions systems. Pupils are motivated highly by the incentives available to improve their behaviour and learning, including reward trips. In lessons many teachers demonstrate that the positive relationships they have with pupils contribute to creating a constructive working environment. Where teaching is less effectively engaging pupils, there remains some low level disruption to lessons. Pupils told inspectors that they are aware of the small minority of their peers who are not responding as well as they might, but this is much less than at the time of the last inspection.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Leaders continue to collect and use detailed information about pupils' progress and attainment. Their analysis suggests that overall rates of progress continue to improve, but more slowly than the targets leaders identified following the last inspection. Disadvantaged pupils' slower rates of progress, reported following the last monitoring inspection, continue. This results in wider differences between these pupils and their peers. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities also continue to achieve less well than other pupils at the school. Other variations remain between how well other groups of pupils are doing, and between subjects, but these differences are less for those pupils lower down the school.

Leaders' analysis identifies that progress in mathematics has increased recently for pupils in Year 11, but that only a small proportion of pupils are on track to achieve their target grades in science. High-prior-attaining pupils are set to achieve outcomes closer to their targets than pupils with low levels of prior attainment. Pupils in Year 10 are currently benefiting from the recent improvements in teaching. For example, in recent mock examinations in English and mathematics, attainment shows sharp improvements compared with the performance of the previous cohort.

### **External support**

The trust's raising achievement board (RAB) carries out meetings at the school at six-weekly intervals. These sessions enable those responsible for governance, and leaders from the school, to focus on specific aspects of the school's effectiveness in depth. The trust is able to maintain a very clear understanding of the progress that the school is making and plan appropriately for support. The involvement of school leaders ensures clarity of vision and opportunity to share key messages with the trust. The RAB process leads to agreed strategic actions. For example, a system leader from the trust now supports school leaders' work to raise the attendance of pupils through involvement in meetings with parents to discuss absence concerns. Trust directors follow up the subsequent actions taken and evaluate their impact on pupils.

Recent audits by the trust have reviewed the school's attendance and pupil premium strategy. The findings of these audits have been used well by school leaders to inform future plans in these key areas of focus at the school.

The trust has supported school leaders' actions regarding tracking the quality of teaching and learning. They have ensured that support and development plans are in place for staff who require them and monitor the progress that teachers make as a result of these interventions.