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Ms Trudy Chappell
Co-Principal (Education)
Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education
50 Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4NF

Dear Ms Chappell

Special measures monitoring inspection of Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Following my visit with Peter Green, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Ofsted Inspectors Justine Hocking and Penny Mathers to your school on 27–28 June 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 November 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.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Leaders and governors must take urgent and immediate action to assure secure safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school by:
 - ensuring that leaders responsible for safeguarding have the experience, knowledge and understanding to carry out their duties effectively
 - providing high-quality training for all staff to help them to identify risks to pupils and learners
 - installing a secure and reliable system for recording and referring concerns about pupils and learners
 - insisting that safeguarding procedures and practices are monitored closely, regularly and in accordance with expected good practice
 - making sure that risk assessments and care plans are comprehensive, up to date and shared routinely with those who teach and care for pupils and learners
 - implementing stricter procedures to maintain site security.
- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management by:
 - reviewing and evaluating the vision, values and purpose of the school so that they are relevant and clear to all
 - making certain that leaders, governors and staff at all levels are held to account for the school's performance through a rigorous review and appraisal process
 - ensuring that the concerns raised about staff's care and support of pupils and learners are thoroughly investigated and recorded systematically
 - implementing a clear communication policy, including a consistent approach to the use of British sign language (BSL)
 - establishing an effective system for assessing, measuring, tracking and evaluating the progress of pupils and learners
 - analysing information about pupils' behaviour in order to bring about improvements.
- Improve teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils and learners by:
 - making better use of assessment information to set targets and plan for their learning, particularly, but not exclusively, in the primary phase
 - providing a more inspiring and orderly environment for primary-aged pupils
 - ensuring that the most able, including those who are disadvantaged, are

stretched and challenged to achieve highly

- focusing on improving the specialist college learners' communication and language skills, so that they are better equipped for their next steps and employment where appropriate.
- Ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- Ensure that monitoring undertaken by managers, governors and the independent visitor is effective in evaluating the quality of the residential provision and identifies areas for improvement.
- Ensure that staff receive good-quality supervision that leads directly to good progress for all pupils and learners.
- 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 27 June 2018 to 28 June 2018

Evidence

We met with you and your senior leadership team. We held discussions with middle leaders, staff, groups of pupils, college students, members of the governing body and trustees. Telephone conversations were held with representatives from the Devon and Wiltshire local authorities, and with parents to gather their views.

We observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times. Together with leaders, we conducted visits to classrooms to observe pupils' and students' progress and their attitudes to learning. We scrutinised pupils' and students' work across a range of subjects and year groups.

We analysed a wide range of documentation, including: the academy's evaluation of its own performance; development plans; behaviour logs; and information relating to pupils' and students' current achievement and progress. We also checked the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.

Context

Significant changes in staffing have taken place since the second monitoring visit in December 2017. Most notable of these staffing changes was the departure of the executive principal. There are now two substantive co-principals in place who hold distinct roles. One holds responsibility for the quality of education, and the other for safeguarding and care. There have been changes in the board of trustees and board of governors, with a new chair and vice chair of the governing body in place and all other positions successfully filled.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You and your co-principal have made an impressive start to your tenure. Your impact is eloquently summed up by a member of staff who commented that you have 'come in, grabbed the academy and shaken it up'. As leaders, your passion, drive and vision are tangible. Together, you have not shirked from making difficult decisions in order to quickly improve the quality of education and care that pupils receive. You have commanded the respect of staff by your no-nonsense approach and your visible commitment to staff and pupils. You lead by example and expect the best of yourselves and of your staff. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the staff's morale and the commitment by all to improve the academy. However, you are in no doubt that there is significant work required in order to ensure that pupils and students make the progress of which they are capable. There is a significant legacy of underachievement which, together with your staff, you are determined to eradicate. You are determined and have begun to move the journey of improvement at a faster pace. It is crucial that this momentum

is sustained for the academy to provide pupils with an effective standard of education.

Inspection evidence shows that systems are now more securely in place to safeguard pupils. There is an expectation that all staff adhere consistently to agreed policies and procedures to minimise risk to pupils. This is as a direct result of the work undertaken by your co-principal, who has overall responsibility for safeguarding at the academy, and by the head of care. Together, they are ensuring that systems and procedures are now more securely in place to rigorously monitor and evaluate safeguarding arrangements. For example, risk assessments are much improved. This is because they are clear and accurate, and clearly understood by staff, helping to minimise risk to pupils. While the procedures and processes for following up instances of physical restraint are now more robust and have resulted in a significant reduction in its use, there are still some instances where de-escalation strategies are less effective. Leaders now monitor and analyse more carefully these incidents in order to bring about improvements and more effectively support pupils. As a result, the number of restraints has fallen since the previous monitoring visit.

Leaders and managers do not yet have clear records in place to confirm that they have themselves ensured that all adults who work at an independent hair academy within the school grounds have been checked to ensure their suitability to work with children and young people. Currently, the processes in place do not provide evidence of good safer recruitment processes, because there is no clear record of how many adults are working at the academy.

Improvements to site security have been made since the last monitoring visit. All visitors have to wear passes that clearly identify visitors who are able to be on site without an escort and those who must be accompanied. These additional checks are further helping to reduce the potential risks to pupils.

Increased challenge from governors and trustees is helping to ensure that you are held to account for the academy's progress in completing planned actions and in driving forward the necessary improvements. Together with governors, you now have a clear and accurate understanding of the direction that the academy needs to take. The school's action plan to tackle weaknesses has been carefully refined to ensure that it is fit for purpose. For example, you have identified the need for further restructuring, especially of middle leaders, to ensure that leaders at all levels drive forward planned improvements. This restructuring will be pivotal to the onward journey of improvement across the academy.

Inspection evidence found that leaders and staff do not currently record the progress of pupils against their education, health and care plans well enough, which is hampering the progress that pupils make. Of particular importance, there is more work to be undertaken to ensure that governors receive accurate and suitably detailed information and analysis of pupils' progress. This will enable them to

rigorously monitor pupils' achievement, and challenge you and your staff more closely to ensure that pupils make stronger progress.

There have been momentous changes in the learning environment, especially in the primary phase. Classrooms are light and airy with resources which better meet pupils' needs. The development of the outside space is impressive. These spaces provide pupils with a range of stimulating experiences. Pupils appreciate that their views are listened to by leaders and now enjoy taking greater ownership of their learning environment.

Parents speak positively about the quality of education and care that their children are receiving. They welcome the support that you provide for both their children and wider family members. This was exemplified by one parent who told us that, as a result of the recent work of the academy, 'My daughter has an interesting and bright future.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is stronger. This is because you have worked closely with staff to tackle weaknesses and improve their practice through coaching and high-quality professional development. Staff welcome this level of support and challenge. In addition, they appreciate the support to improve their teaching through increased opportunities to observe each other and share good practice. The professional feedback that staff receive is improving teaching. For example, teachers' questioning is more precise, checking pupils' understanding and probing to require them to think more deeply.

As a result of your strong leadership, expectations of staff and pupils have risen sharply. There is now an air of confidence in staff who are resolute to improve outcomes for pupils. Staff share your high aspirations and expect pupils to work hard and achieve well. Nevertheless, scrutiny of pupils' work across the school and college shows that more work is required to strengthen the progress that pupils make. This is because staff are not consistently able to translate broad learning goals into smaller, more realistic steps to meet pupils' individual needs. There remains a lack of accuracy in pupils' progress information. This means that staff do not have a consistently accurate understanding of what pupils know, can do and understand, and of their next steps.

Increasingly, teachers plan activities which engage pupils. The substantial changes in the curriculum provide pupils with learning that inspires and motivates them. For example, the significant increase in the amount of time spent teaching BSL is having a positive impact on pupils. As a result, pupils are developing better communication skills and are more successfully accessing a wider range of subjects, such as science and history.

Students in the college benefit from high-quality work experience. This is as a result

of more effective partnership working with a wide range of employers. Managers have made strong progress in the development of supported internships. These are well chosen to meet students' aspirations, for example in hospitality, retail and agriculture. This is enabling students to grow in confidence and to make a positive contribution to society. Consequently, students are now able to make a positive contribution and gain skills so that they are better prepared for education, training or employment. Work experience, coupled with work in the classroom, is raising students' hopes and aspirations for the future. The college is now able to provide helpful and informed careers education advice and guidance to students. For example, a student had the opportunity to visit Savile Row. This experience further galvanised their determination to set up a business and be successful.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils talk positively about their experiences in school and college. They particularly welcome the personal and emotional support from staff. During the visit, we saw how pupils engage positively with staff and their learning. This is particularly so where pupils are highly motivated and excited about their work. For example, older pupils were engrossed in preparing for their forthcoming production. They were learning how lighting can be used to portray emotion and atmosphere. They responded well to adults, carefully following instructions and guidance.

Pupils told us that they feel safe in school. They know who to contact if they have any concerns and are confident that these will be sorted. Pupils are taught internet safety well and most know how to keep safe online. However, pupils' understanding of radicalisation and extremism is less well developed. This is because staff are less confident about how to approach such discussions with pupils. Leaders need to tackle this to ensure that pupils have a good understanding in order to reduce risk.

Outcomes for pupils

There is evidence that pupils are making better progress in their learning across a wider range of subjects and in more year groups. However, it remains too variable because the learning activities planned do not yet consistently and precisely meet the needs of pupils to ensure that they make secure, strong progress. There remain discrepancies in pupils' assessment information which need to be quickly resolved. There are inconsistencies in staff's awareness of what pupils know, can do and understand, and this hampers pupils' progress. While there is no discernible difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers, you know that the outcomes of all pupils, including the most able, need to move on at an even faster pace to stamp out the legacy of underachievement.

External support

Since taking up your post, you have wasted no time in accessing external support to speed up the pace of improvement. For example, a national leader in education has visited the school and provided you with insightful guidance to make necessary improvements. Your commitment to improving staff's knowledge and expertise is evident. You and governors are committed to ensure that staff further develop their skills and expertise in the teaching of the deaf. For example, by working with the University of Glasgow to undertake research on how deaf pupils learn best. Your engagement with the local authorities who place pupils at the school has significantly improved and helps to ensure better outcomes for pupils.