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Steve Kneller
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Dear Mr Kneller

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hanham Woods Academy

Following my visit with Ofsted Inspectors Carol Hannaford and Stuart Wilson to your school on 18–19 September 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 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.

The school's improvement plans are 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 or equivalent 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 second monitoring inspection on 18 September 2018 to 19 September 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 and the chair of the academy council (local governing body). They met with senior and middle leaders, a group of staff and groups of pupils.

Context

There have been further significant changes in staffing since the last visit in May. The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the addition of an assistant headteacher. A new head of mathematics has been appointed. There have also been a number of changes of classroom teachers.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The principal has maintained the momentum for improvement that was noted at the last monitoring visit in May 2018. Supported by the multi-academy trust, he has strengthened his team of senior leaders. The leadership team now have the capacity to address the issues highlighted when the school was deemed to require special measures in October 2017. The senior team have a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Their restless energy has proved infectious and staff morale is high.

There has been an external review of governance and the academy council has drawn up and begun to implement a plan to address its recommendations. The trust has also acted to strengthen the council by seeking out new members who have experience of school governance. As a result, there is a clearer focus on improvement and a greater degree of challenge to school leaders. The impact of these developments will be a focus of later monitoring visits.

Leaders are implementing a thoughtful and coherent plan to improve teachers' skills. They have created a shared language about teaching that gives teachers a framework to discuss their ideas. This is lifting the quality of teaching across most areas of the school. Some of the earliest areas of focus are now well embedded and having a significant impact. For example, pupils are now clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it. Other initiatives have been introduced more recently and are as yet inconsistently applied and so not yet as effective. Leaders are fully aware of the need to monitor and support their colleagues to ensure consistency.

Middle leaders report that they benefit from the judicious balance of challenge and support they receive from senior leaders. This is supplemented by significant input from the trust's school improvement team. Several key middle leaders are relatively new in their posts. Senior leaders understand that they will require ongoing support if they are to fulfil their potential to raise the quality of teaching across their departments.

Leaders are focused on addressing low standards of literacy. A whole-school approach has been implemented and staff and pupils know what is expected of them. However, there is not yet consistency across all subjects. For example, spellings and punctuation are regularly corrected in history and geography, but rarely in a number of other subjects. School leaders have also implemented a scheme to highlight the importance of reading every day. The intention of the initiative is very positive but the quality of implementation is inconsistent, so the effect is limited. Raising the profile, and hence standards, of literacy requires further work if it is to have the impact that leaders hope for.

Leaders have been successful in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. These pupils are now making better progress because the quality of teaching overall is improving. The provisional results for 2018 GCSEs also show an improvement for these pupils, partly because of an effective programme to support them in the run up to their examinations. However, there are further gains to be made. Leaders ask teachers to use a range of techniques in their teaching to help disadvantaged pupils but at the moment these are not evident in many classrooms. There are also plans to focus in on the barriers to learning of individual pupils in a 'passport'. However, this potentially powerful tool is yet to be fully implemented.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is improving. Most teachers are now expecting more of their pupils, and pupils are responding positively to the challenge. While expectations are not yet universally high, the level of consistency across the school is significantly better than at the last monitoring visit. Expectations have been raised by improvements to the curriculum, which is now more coherent and stretching across most subject areas, including the core of English, mathematics and science. There are some gaps in pupils' knowledge that will take time to overcome, however. For example in Year 11, some pupils are studying Shakespeare for the first time in several years. Teachers and pupils are working together well to overcome this issue.

Teachers are increasingly confident and fluent in explaining to pupils what they are trying to achieve and why it is important. This helps pupils to build their knowledge. In physical education, for example, pupils are clearly enthused and engaged by the teacher's clarity and enthusiasm for the topic and respond very positively.

The most able pupils are now being challenged more regularly in many, but not all, subjects. They report that teachers regularly give them additional or alternative

tasks that make them think. However, this group of pupils do not have many opportunities to stimulate them beyond individual lessons, for example in the arts, or leadership opportunities.

Because teachers are now much more consistent in their expectations, pupils show an increasing degree of pride in their work and their achievements. Leaders and teachers acknowledge that they have more to do in this regard, but the improvement is palpable.

Leaders are working with teachers to improve the effectiveness of assessment. The trust provides a good range of assessment material that measures progress over time. However, pupils' progress is sometimes slowed because they are not clear about how exactly to improve the work. Teachers offer advice and targets but sometimes this is not precise enough to help.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The number of pupils excluded from school has dropped significantly. This is largely because teachers are very consistent in the way they manage behaviour. Pupils know what is expected of them and they respond appropriately. Instances of disruption are relatively few and teachers deal with them well. Teachers who are new to the school benefit from the school's consistent approach to behaviour and consequently establish themselves quickly. Pupils appreciate the calm and orderly atmosphere because they can concentrate on their work.

Pupils are beginning to take more pride in their work and their achievements at school. Some pupils are beginning to be more ambitious for themselves. However, too many older pupils are unclear about their aspirations for the future. This is preventing them from striving to maximise their potential.

Leaders' efforts to improve attendance have not been successful so far. Attendance is broadly similar to that at the time of the inspection in 2017. There are basic systems in place, but the school is not currently precise enough in targeting its efforts. Leaders are aware of the deficiencies and are prioritising improvement in attendance this term.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils achieved better results in 2018 GCSEs than in previous years. This is the result of improvements in the quality of teaching and a range of effective interventions. The results are currently provisional. However, early indications are that the amount of progress pupils made from their starting points has also improved. Nonetheless outcomes remain below the national average.

Evidence from pupils' books and time spent in lessons indicate that current pupils are also beginning to make better progress. Pupils in key stage 3 are responding to

the improved curriculum and higher expectations of teachers to produce work of a higher quality. Pupils also report that they are making better progress because staffing is more settled and leaders have been able to recruit teachers who are subject specialists.

The challenge now is to ensure that these recent improvements are embedded for all pupils in all subjects.

External support

The trust has been active in supporting the school since the inspection. It has acted to improve governance and to strengthen the senior leadership team. These strategies have increased the challenge to school leaders and teachers. They have recognised, however, that the challenge must be paired with support to meet that challenge. The trust has used its team of school improvement staff to help middle leaders and teachers improve the curriculum. This has been a significant factor in raising the level of expectation across the school. The challenge now is to have the same impact on continuing to improve the quality of teaching.