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10 May 2019

Steve Kneller  
Principal  
Hanham Woods Academy  
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Dear Mr Kneller

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Hanham Woods Academy**

Following my visit with Suzanne Richards, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 25 to 26 April 2019, 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 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.

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 and 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 this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 25 April 2019 to 26 April 2019**

### **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), the chair of the trust board and the chair of the academy council (local governing body). They met with senior and middle leaders and groups of pupils.

On this visit, inspectors scrutinised four areas that are central to the school's success. They focused on the progress of the most able pupils, the progress of disadvantaged pupils, school leaders' efforts to improve attendance and the standard of literacy across the school.

### **Context**

There have been relatively few changes to staffing since the last monitoring visit in the autumn term. Recently released figures show the predicted intake for Year 7 in September is healthy and that parents are increasingly choosing to send their children to the school.

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

Many of the improvements that leaders implemented in the last year are now coming to fruition. The vast majority of systems are in place and leaders are focused on ensuring that the culture of the school supports achievement for all its pupils.

School leaders have been working with teachers and pupils to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve. In the past, expectations of the most able pupils were lower than in other schools. There have been significant improvements in this aspect of the school's work. All pupils, including the most able pupils, are now being set work that encourages them to stop and think. To a large extent, this is the result of a revised curriculum that has been implemented across the multi-academy trust's schools. The curriculum has reduced the inconsistencies in expectations between departments that were noted in previous visits. Leaders are ensuring that teachers have the skills to deliver the curriculum by organising effective training.

Leaders are monitoring the quality of teaching robustly. They make sure that teachers follow the school's policies and procedures. As a result, pupils report a much greater consistency from teachers across the school. Initially, leaders placed an emphasis on monitoring what teachers do rather than on what pupils learn. This

was appropriate in the early days of the special measures inspection judgement. Leaders are now rightly beginning to shift the focus to monitoring the impact of teachers' work rather than mere compliance with school policies.

Leaders have made significant improvements to provision for disadvantaged pupils. They have placed a greater emphasis on ensuring that these pupils get the attention they need in lessons. They are making sure pupils are actively involved in lessons by answering questions and receiving good-quality feedback that helps them to improve. Their progress is tracked, and support is put in place if they fall behind. As a result of this work, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress.

Leaders are now addressing poor attendance robustly. They are analysing which groups of pupils are absent and they are tackling the issue with much greater urgency. They remind pupils of the importance of good attendance regularly. Pastoral staff are working with pupils and families to overcome any barriers they face in attending school every day. The principal is also monitoring attendance directly. This has raised the profile across the school. The increased focus has had a significant impact. Attendance is rising sharply and, although not there yet, is now approaching national average levels. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also improving rapidly.

Leaders' efforts to tackle low standards of literacy have not yet had the impact they desire. They have implemented a series of initiatives, but these have yet to raise the standard to that in other schools. Senior and middle leaders have not monitored the standard of reading and writing as effectively as other areas of the school's performance. For example, there is a whole-school policy to address spelling, punctuation and grammar. Where teachers insist that pupils check and correct their work, the standard of written English is good. However, some subjects, and some teachers, do not follow the policy and, consequently, pupils' spelling and grammar are weak in these subjects. It is notable that the same pupils display higher standards of literacy in some subjects than they do in others. The ability of pupils to write extended passages that lay out their understanding of a topic is also weak in some subjects. In history, teachers are successful in teaching pupils how to tackle complicated questions that need long written answers. Pupils respond well, and standards are high. However, in other subjects, pupils produce work of a lower standard. This is because pupils are not taught to structure their writing and teachers have lower expectations. The quality of writing is now the biggest issue facing school leaders and teachers in raising standards.

The academy council (local governing body) checks appropriately on the work of school leaders. Councillors receive regular training and they are well supported by the trust. They are focused on the key areas of the school's performance and ask well-informed questions. Sometimes, however, they are too easily satisfied by leaders' answers.

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

Teachers have continued to raise their expectations of pupils. They have used the trust's curriculum to help them plan activities that build pupils' understanding in a coherent way. Pupils say that most teachers are now clearer in their explanations and that the work they are set challenges them to think more than it used to. There are still differences in expectations between subjects, but these are less significant than those found in previous monitoring inspections.

Teachers are assessing pupils' work well to plan new activities that build on pupils' understanding and tackles errors. In many subjects, there is a good dialogue in pupils' books between teachers and pupils about the work and how to improve it. In most subjects, the teachers clearly explain both what needs to improve and how to improve it. Sometimes, however, the advice is too vague to help pupils. In some cases, the teacher is spending considerable effort in providing advice but then not insisting that pupils reflect and learn from it.

The most able pupils are regularly given tasks that make them think more deeply. This is allowing them to reach higher standards. However, some pupils report that these challenges are often optional, and so not all those who are capable undertake them.

Teachers are supporting disadvantaged pupils with some simple but effective strategies to make sure pupils are fully engaged in their lessons. These strategies are beginning to have an effect and these pupils are now making better progress.

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

There has been a substantial improvement in the attendance of pupils, particularly of disadvantaged pupils. This has happened because leaders have raised the profile of attendance in school. Systems to check on absence are in place and staff track closely the attendance of pupils whose absence has been too high in the past. The improvement in attendance has been a success story for the school this year. Leaders also check on punctuality. This too has improved this year. This is partially because teachers start lessons crisply, often with an activity that engages pupils and settles them in to the lesson. Consequently, pupils do not want to be late.

Pupils behave well in their classes. They do what teachers ask of them without complaint. The use of sanctions, such as removal from lessons and exclusion, has dropped very significantly.

Increasingly, pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are responding to the higher expectations of their teachers and the improved quality of teaching. There is little unfinished work in books. However, standards of presentation are too variable. Some teachers insist that pupils take care over their work and that it is well presented. But some do not. Pupils' books reflect this inconsistency. Sometimes, the

same pupil shows great pride in their work in one subject and presents an untidy effort in another.

There are an increasing number of activities on offer to pupils to enrich their school life. For example, there are regular 'lunchtime lectures' where visitors and school staff talk about their experiences and interests. Some older pupils also volunteer to help others improve their reading. While these opportunities do exist, some pupils are reluctant to engage with them. This attitude is a legacy of a previous period in the life of the school and leaders and teachers are working hard to overcome it.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The quality of work in pupils' books is improving. In some subjects, such as history and mathematics, the standard is significantly higher than it was in the autumn. In others, improvement is slower. Much of this improvement is the result of the new curriculum. This is setting appropriate expectations and teachers are finding that pupils are able to cope with the standard. Not only that, but that they enjoy it too. The most able are more regularly stretched and are responding by producing work of a higher calibre. Pupils are also responding to teachers' questions with more confidence and a richer vocabulary.

The one area where standards are not improving fast enough is literacy. Pupils are not consistently receiving the help they need to be able to express themselves well in writing. This is holding them back from achieving more.

### **External support**

The school has drawn the support it needs from its multi-academy trust rather than from outside the trust. This has proved to be very effective. Trust leaders hold school leaders, including the local academy council, to account robustly by scrutinising the school's performance regularly. Senior and middle leaders are also challenged and supported by the trust via a strong line management structure. Trust officers also coach middle leaders and have played an important role in supporting the introduction of the new curriculum.