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Dave Smith
Principal
The Ormiston Ilkeston Academy
King George Avenue
Ilkeston
DE7 5HS

Dear Mr Smith

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Ormiston Ilkeston Academy

Following my visit with Judith Gooding Additional Inspector and Marian Marks Additional Inspector to your academy on 21 and 22 May 2013, 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 which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

This visit was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2012. 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, the academy is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures. I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, DfE - Academies Advisers Unit, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of the Ormiston Academies Trust.

Yours sincerely

John Peckham

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2012

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good or better by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations and use the information they have about students' attainment to set work that is challenging enough for all abilities
 - taking a consistent approach to correcting students' errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, especially in their English work
 - encouraging all students to take care in the presentation of their work
 - ensuring that all individuals are actively involved in their learning, particularly when working in groups.

- Take swift action to close gaps in the achievement of different groups of students by:
 - raising teachers' awareness of the need to tackle the shortfall in boys' achievement, so that they plan suitable learning activities to accelerate progress for boys
 - tracking the achievement of boys in all year groups and providing timely support for those at risk of falling behind
 - reviewing the use of the pupil premium funding and checking regularly its impact, so that students eligible for this support make accelerated progress.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that staff, governors and all stakeholders are involved in evaluating the school's work and are fully aware of priorities for improvement
 - ensuring that action plans are more sharply focused on the most urgent priorities, and that the school's progress in tackling these is checked frequently and rigorously.

- Ensure that the governing body holds leaders to account for students' achievement and is fully involved in decisions relating to the use of the pupil premium funding.

- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average by July 2013.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 May 2013

Evidence

On this visit, a focus was placed on the first, third and fifth areas for improvement set out above. Achievement, the second area, will be examined more closely following the results in the summer of 2013. The work of the governing body, the fourth area for improvement, will also be scrutinised once the new, merged governing body is fully functioning in the autumn term.

Inspectors observed significant parts of 21 lessons, mostly in English, mathematics and science. Some further lessons were briefly visited and students' books were scrutinised during these observations. Formal and informal discussions were held with groups of students. Meetings were held with the Principal, other senior leaders, middle leaders and teaching and support staff. A meeting was held for parents so that their views could be included. A joint scrutiny of work in students' books was undertaken with some of the academy's teachers and the academy's current attendance, attainment and other data were analysed. Inspectors observed the school site at change of lessons and at break and lunchtimes. They looked at records of education advisor visits, those of governing body meetings and of the progress board meetings. The academy's record of checks on the suitability of staff, together with safeguarding policies and procedures, were also scrutinised.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in February 2013, one teaching assistant has left the academy and an intervention teacher is now employed for an additional two days each week. The mathematics department continues to receive support from a consultant but this has been reduced to two days every two weeks. Training has been organised and delivered for middle leaders and all members of staff. A shadow governing body for the new, merged academy has been established.

Plans for merging this academy with the Ormiston Enterprise Academy are progressing. The acting principal at the Ilkeston Academy has been confirmed as the new principal and a restructuring of the staffing has been undertaken. Staff have now been appointed to new roles in the merged academy and this has resulted in a number of staff taking voluntary redundancy. Some staff have gained alternative posts or promotion elsewhere and will also be leaving at the end of term.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

According to the academy's own monitoring, achievement has improved slightly during this year, compared to 2012. The proportions of students making expected progress in English and mathematics are predicted to increase significantly. There are now much better systems in place to enable leaders to monitor and track the

achievement of students, but this is still dependent upon assessment data of variable quality. Training has begun to enable middle leaders to understand the potential and use of the academy's systems, however, most teachers are as yet unaware of how to use the analysis to promote learning and tackle underachievement in their classes.

In the lessons visited by inspectors, some excellent achievement was observed. In the majority, however, low expectations, an absence of challenge and a lack of clarity about the learning seriously inhibited the progress of students. Students were most positive about their progress in English and described receiving very good, structured advice about how to improve their work. Some students, depending on the teacher or group, enjoyed their science and mathematics lessons. Overall, however, much student work is poorly presented and shows a distinct lack of pride.

The academy continues to offer a range of extended opportunities for students to broaden their experience and knowledge, such as the links with the Gambia, the Keilder Challenge and work experience. Several students however, felt that the academy could do more to explain to them the process of the merger and to listen to their views.

The quality of teaching

Training has been provided for teachers in effective planning for the different needs of students, about strategies for developing literacy, improving presentation of students' work and in better marking and assessment. The academy's own monitoring of teaching, carried out using lesson observations notified five days in advance, indicated an improvement in overall quality, with teaching in 75% of lessons being good or better and none inadequate. The view of inspectors, however, was very different. Of the teaching observed in lessons during this visit, a quarter was judged inadequate and half required improvement. School leaders had not made enough allowance for the differences between a lesson prepared well in advance for a known monitoring visit and the typical daily experience of most students. As a result, teachers are not necessarily fully aware that they need to improve, or how.

The most frequent shortcomings in the lessons observed by inspectors were a lack of allowance for the different needs of students in the class, poor use of questioning to check and deepen understanding and too few opportunities for students to work independently and talk with one another about their learning. Most books scrutinised were marked regularly with comments, but these were not always sufficiently detailed or helpful to enable students to know how to improve. There were almost no examples observed where the marking had been used well to promote correction of mistakes or further understanding of the work. In many cases, teachers were using poor-quality projectors and whiteboards, did not take full advantage of the

potential of information and communication technology to enhance their teaching and used poorly presented worksheets.

Some teachers have begun to use some of the new guidance provided to them about the promotion of literacy skills, mostly in English and humanities subjects. Elsewhere, however, while some subject-specific words in mathematics and science were corrected, there was little evidence that teachers were insisting on higher standards of presentation or the consistent use of the school's literacy policy.

In the small proportion of good and outstanding teaching observed, most students demonstrated that when given interesting and challenging tasks, they could work enthusiastically in groups to discuss their learning and produce high-quality work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students and parents are clear that the overall standard of behaviour in the academy has improved since January. There are better systems to monitor and follow up poor conduct and the number of exclusions has decreased substantially compared to the previous year. However, students also said that the academy's behaviour policies are not being consistently used by all staff. This view was supported by inspectors' observations and comments from the leadership team. Students described lessons where they knew that there would be no consequence if they arrived late. Behaviour in lessons, although mostly compliant, deteriorates quickly when the school's systems are not applied and where the learning taking place is not appropriate.

Attendance has improved and is now closer to the national average. The number of students with persistent absence has decreased substantially since this time last year. This is due to a very concerted approach to following up absence quickly, and a very committed and dedicated team of attendance staff who have been able to use a skilful mix of care, support and enforcement. However, discussions with students suggest that overall, attendance is unlikely to show a big improvement until the quality of teaching gets better and students experience more exciting and stimulating learning.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The uncertainty about long-term leadership prior to the appointment of the Principal in April, together with the process which has required all leaders to apply for positions in the new structure, has created a substantial disruption to the continuity of leadership and management. As a result, although a range of new systems has been developed, leaders have not properly monitored the effectiveness with which they are being implemented. The approach to monitoring the quality of teaching agreed with the professional associations has not allowed leaders to gain an accurate picture. As a result, teachers and other staff have been unable to benefit

from an honest appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses. Training and development that would provide specific support to individuals have not been possible. Most teachers do not have a clear picture of the distance that needs to be travelled in terms of professional development for the majority of teaching to be consistently good.

Senior leaders have not effectively used other opportunities to gather further information about learning and progress, such as through book scrutiny, learning walks and discussions with students. Because of this, there is a lack of evidence to promote professional and constructive performance management discussions. In some cases, evidence of teachers who are not meeting the current teaching standards has not been properly linked to their performance management process.

Now established, the new leadership team is, however, enthusiastic and ambitious to bring about rapid improvement in the academy. The re-shaped governing body has focused well on improvement, with the progress board meeting every fortnight to review developments. However, because of the lack of accurate teaching quality data, their view of this aspect of the academy's development has been distorted.

In areas where the data are much more robust, such as attendance and behaviour, the academy is now monitoring in a manner that will enable effective evaluation and quick response.

The parents who attended the meeting held with the lead inspector expressed a range of concerns and anxieties about the academy, mostly related to the quality of teaching or the progress of their children. They also felt that the academy needed to explain better the journey through special measures and the merger plans. Parents did, however, appreciate the commitment that the Ormiston Academies Trust was showing towards the academy and the community and several parents were keen to provide more tangible support to help the academy improve more quickly.

External support

The academy sponsor, Ormiston Academies Trust, continues to provide the support of the mathematics consultant, the education advisor and the Chair of the Governing Body. These individuals provide valued and accurate advice and support. The Trust is also pressing ahead with the proposed new building and urgent refurbishment work on the Ilkeston site.

There is a proposed support programme being developed for the next academic year which may, in the light of this report, need to be adapted to ensure that sufficient practical leadership advice and support is available to enable rapid improvement.