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Mrs Angela Hull
Headteacher
Outwood Academy Foxhills
Foxhills Road, Scunthorpe
Lincolnshire
DN15 8LJ

Dear Mrs Hull

Special measures monitoring inspection of Outwood Academy Foxhills

Following my visit with Darren Stewart, Additional Inspector, to your school on 2 and 3 December 2014, 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.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may 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, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director for People for North Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Helen Storey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2014

- Improve teaching to good or better by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - raising teachers' expectations as to what students can achieve
 - planning lessons which ensure that students of all abilities make more rapid progress and achieve highly
 - improving marking and the advice given to all students, so that they know what they have done well, are shown how to improve their work and by making sure that teachers check that these improvements have been made.

- Raise attainment and ensure that all groups of students make good progress in all subjects by:
 - improving the standards of students' reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills
 - improving students' attitudes to learning and ensuring that they work hard and quickly in every lesson and take care over the presentation of their work
 - challenging students, particularly the most able in every lesson, so that they are encouraged to think for themselves and to produce work of a high quality
 - keeping careful checks on the progress of all individuals and groups who are not making the progress they should and by providing the help they need to catch up in their work.

- Make sure that leadership and governance are effective by:
 - taking actions to ensure that all senior and subject leaders develop the skills necessary to improve the quality of teaching and accelerate students' progress
 - establishing secure arrangements so that governors can hold senior and subject leaders to account for the impact of their work
 - taking the necessary actions so that the range of subjects and courses provided, particularly at Key Stage 4, successfully prepare students for future study, training and employment
 - ensuring efficient management of the academy's finances so that its accommodation is fit for purpose and staff and resources are used to best effect in driving up standards
 - undertaking an external review of governance and of the academy's use of the pupil premium in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 2 to 3 December 2014.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work and met with the Principal, the Executive Principal, other senior and middle leaders in the academy, groups of students and the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed learning, two lessons were observed jointly with members of the academy's senior leadership team. They scrutinised a range of documents including the academy's analysis of recent data concerning students' current attainment and progress, this included the targets that the academy has set for 2015 examination results. Attendance, behaviour and exclusions data were also scrutinised.

Context

Nine new staff joined the academy in September 2014, there is one vacancy in modern foreign languages that is currently being covered by a temporary teacher. A permanent head of modern languages will take up post in January 2015. An additional member of staff joined the academy in October 2014 to provide support for students who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The number of students on the academy roll stands at 564, the increase in numbers has been largely due to the admission of newly arrived EAL students.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Clear strategies within the English and mathematics departments are improving students' basic skills. Across the academy work on improving students' literacy is further advanced than numeracy. A number of whole-academy strategies are supporting the development of literacy, for example, the recently opened library and the use of the accelerated reader scheme. It is too early to gauge the impact of these initiatives, but early signs are promising as uptake from students is strong.

Students' attitudes to learning are positive overall, poor behaviour does not impede learning and any low-level disruption is dealt with swiftly, effectively and consistently by staff. There is still work to be done on the specifics of ensuring all students settle quickly, work hard and take pride in the presentation of their work, this is still too variable across the academy.

The academy's data system for checking students' progress is comprehensive, robust and updated weekly. It is used extensively by senior and middle leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and ensure they are precisely targeted. Current data anticipate that the academy will achieve its best GCSE results ever in 2015, 52% A* to C, including English and mathematics. It also shows that the gap between the achievement of all students and those eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is closing and the performance of students in

English is particularly strong. Middle leaders have not yet ensured that this good quality information is used by all teachers in planning so that the needs of students are anticipated and a range of strategies are employed to deepen their understanding.

A particular concern is the current attendance data, which show an overall decline from last year's figures. Evidence to date indicates that whole-academy attendance has declined from 93.87% to 91.5%. However, overall persistent absence is showing an improvement, but is still above the national figure. Current Year 11 students have the lowest attendance, boys' attendance declining by 5% from the previous year and girls' by 3%. This picture is exacerbated by the high number of fixed-term exclusions for this year group. The academy is making strenuous efforts to rectify this, however, inspectors are concerned that these trends, if not halted, may compromise students' achievement at GCSE in 2015.

The quality of teaching

No inadequate teaching was seen from permanent members of the academy staff, however, where temporary solutions were in place there were instances of weak teaching. The clear and detailed information that teachers now receive about students' progress and attainment enables challenging 'aspire' targets to be set in lessons and this is helping to accelerate progress. At its best, for example in science, the most able students are challenged by sharp questions and learning is enhanced by the development of literacy and numeracy skills alongside subject knowledge. However, teachers are not always confident to develop students' learning throughout the lesson through the use of probing questions that ensure all students have fully grasped concepts and ideas. Planning is a strength and lessons are carefully structured and resourced using a consistent model across the academy. Sometimes teachers do not move away from the detail of this lesson plan in order to respond swiftly to the particular needs of the students so that misconceptions can be dispelled and students moved on swiftly in their learning.

The academy recognises that the quality of teaching is still inconsistent both within and across subjects and that work needs to continue on sharing the best practice that it has correctly identified. There are weekly opportunities scheduled for professional development for all teachers and this encompasses a whole-school and departmental dimension. Joint lesson observations with members of the leadership team agreed the strengths and areas for development in teaching that the academy has identified.

The academy has a systematic approach to the marking of students' work but not all teachers are fully implementing this. This means that there are inconsistent standards across the academy and expectations of students are not uniformly high in all lessons. This is reflected in the standard of presentation and the quantity of work students produce. Expectations about homework are similarly varied, some

students reporting that they had no homework over the course of a week. Certain approaches to assessment and marking are proving more effective, for example, when students are given clear targets about how they can make a difference to the quality of their work and are then given time to be able to put this into practice.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Additional capacity from Outwood Grange Academies Trust Directors of Learning is being used to develop heads and second in departments so that they can assume full accountability for students' progress and the leadership of their teams. Directors develop confidence by working alongside heads of department to identify interventions and support the sharing of best practice. Middle leaders new to the academy appreciate this support and see these opportunities as beneficial. However, senior and middle leaders acknowledge that these developments are at an early stage but, nevertheless, a conscientious effort is being made to share excellent practice at departmental level.

A thorough curriculum review has been undertaken and will be in place in September 2015, currently senior leaders are reviewing staffing to ensure that the planned curriculum can be fully staffed with high quality teachers. Elements of the current Year 11 curriculum reflect the need for the academy to concentrate on core subjects to ensure that shortfalls in students' prior learning are made up. In Year 11, there are three students educated in off-site provision and 14 students following level 2 vocational courses for one day a week at a local college. The academy keeps a close eye on these students' progress through regular visits and telephone calls. This provision will not form part of the new curriculum.

Senior leaders have worked closely with governors to develop a strategic plan to improve provision for the growing numbers of EAL students in the academy. This has comprised a detailed induction process together with baseline testing to ensure that students receive the appropriate level of support. Sensible investment has been made in a range of learning resources and specialist support staff. Training is planned for all staff so that they can better meet the needs of these students.

The governing body is now reconstituted within the framework of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust. Recently governors have introduced a system of link reports that are aligned to the priorities in the academy improvement plan and these enable governors to engage more directly with the work of the school. These reports are providing valuable information to the full governing body and recent minutes of meetings show that there is an increased level of challenge enabling governors to hold senior and middle leaders to account. Governors have invested in training on the new Progress 8 measure and have undertaken a full skills audit. A new sponsor governor has been recruited whose legal training and strong links with the local Polish community will bring additional expertise. A review of the pupil premium

funding is scheduled for January 2015. The effectiveness of the new governing body is improving rapidly.

Considerable funding is being spent to ensure the academy's accommodation is fit for purpose. Building work is now in progress to provide specialist accommodation in science, this should be completed in December 2014. A further phase of development is planned for January to provide specialist accommodation in technology. Recently completed accommodation is now in use, for instance the library, and this is adding to the academy's capacity to support students' learning beyond lesson time.

External support

Outwood Grange Academies Trust is effectively supporting improvement and developing sustainable leadership capacity through a coaching and mentoring approach. Extensive additional staffing resources have been provided to rapidly tackle weaknesses in teaching. Creative approaches are being used to recruit highly effective teachers to fill vacancies, using the wider resources of the academy trust and to ensure unqualified teachers have the opportunity to undertake training to secure qualified teacher status. Links have been maintained with the local authority, which is providing additional financial support, for example, for students who speak English as an additional language. The academy is beginning to engage with local primary schools in order to develop a more coordinated approach to transition.