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4 March 2015

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 Janet Pruchniewicz, additional inspector, to your academy on 2 and 3 March 2015, 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 fourth 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 March 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, the Chair of the Governing Body and a newly elected parent governor. Inspectors observed learning and scrutinised students' work, a lesson was observed jointly with a member of the academy's senior leadership team. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the academy's analysis of recent data concerning students' current attainment and progress; attendance, behaviour and exclusions data were also scrutinised.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection a new head of modern foreign languages has taken up post. In-year student admissions have increased the number of students at the academy to 567. Three teachers are on long-term absence from the academy and their teaching is being covered by supply staff.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Most recent performance data show that the academy is on track to reach its targets for 2015. Currently 50.7% of Year 11 students are on target to achieve five A* to C grades including English and mathematics. These data show that the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others has narrowed to 2.5%. Students' progress in Year 11 is currently better in English than mathematics but in both subjects there is an improvement on last year's figures. The academy has undertaken moderation within the academy and with other partners to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate in both the core and foundation subjects. Data for the current Year 10 are similarly encouraging and show strong improvement in students' performance in mathematics.

Initiatives to improve the standards of students' reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills are beginning to bear fruit. Gains are being made in reading and the accelerated reader scheme is enthusing students and motivating them to read widely and often. The 'Maths Walls' are supporting the development of numeracy skills and increasing students' confidence and resilience. Writing is still of a variable quality and in some subjects there are few opportunities for extended writing.

A range of carefully focused interventions support students to achieve their targets. All Year 11 students receive a personalised revision pack that supports their preparation for GCSE examinations. Additional support in English and mathematics is available for students who have been absent, and holiday and weekend revision days are planned in a number of subjects.

The academy is taking action to ensure that students are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Currently all Year 11 students have had an individual careers interview and a day has been dedicated to structured conversations between students, parents and tutors concerning future destinations.

The quality of teaching

Inspectors observed lessons across most subjects at both key stages. No inadequate teaching was seen and the inspector and senior leader agreed the strengths and areas for development from the joint lesson observation. The quality of teaching seen in lessons and over time is variable. Work in students' books is of variable quality and quantity. Not all teachers insist on the same high standards and there is inconsistency both within and across subject areas. When students are absent from the academy, gaps in their learning are evident in their books and work is sometimes incomplete or very brief. This slows the progress that they can make. When students attend regularly and teachers carefully mark their work and provide specific feedback on how to improve, students respond positively. Over time this is increasing the progress that they make in lessons.

Lesson planning is detailed and there is evidence of more differentiated tasks and approaches being used to meet the needs of particular groups of students. This more varied approach is engaging students' interest and increasing their participation and enthusiasm within lessons. In the most effective lessons this is then built on by skilful questioning from the teacher that deepens students' understanding and challenges thinking. The most able students benefit from this approach because it allows them to reach their potential more quickly and to push the boundaries of their knowledge and understanding further.

Senior leaders are extending the range of methods that they use to keep a close check on the quality of teaching. Scrutiny of students' work is playing an increasingly important part in their monitoring. They are developing middle leaders well so that they share a clear understanding of what constitutes good teaching and so are able to hold their departments to account and tackle inconsistencies.

Leaders have introduced some promising strategies to promote students' language development across the curriculum, for example, key vocabulary lists for students who are new to speaking English as an additional language. Some teachers are making effective use of display to support students' literacy and numeracy skills. However, this good practice has not yet been shared widely or given sufficient emphasis to ensure that the strategies are used throughout the academy.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students, teachers and parents are of the view that behaviour continues to improve at the academy. Results from a recent survey show that parents are satisfied that their children are safe and behaviour is well managed. Records show that bullying is rare and when it happens it is dealt with. Students say they feel safe and safeguarding processes are robust. Students, teachers and governors comment on the improvements in behaviour around the academy and in lessons. Interactions between students and between staff and students are characterised by respect and tolerance, inspectors did not see any negative attitudes. On occasion there is still some low-level disruption and lack of interest in lessons when work is not challenging enough and does not motivate students.

Leaders recognise that attendance remains a key issue for the academy. Overall absence is higher than the national figure and persistent absence is very high at 13.8%. Disadvantaged students, those who speak English as an additional language (EAL), students with special educational needs and girls have particularly high absence rates. Absence rates for Year 11 are higher than any other year group and this is of particular concern to the academy. The academy is implementing a range of strategies to tackle poor attendance but they are not demonstrating sufficient impact. Tracking systems are in place but the data from these are not given the same high profile as performance data and are not used sharply enough to identify vulnerable groups and evaluate the effectiveness of the improvement strategies that are being used.

Although decreasing, fixed-term exclusions remain very high, with a large number of students being excluded for one day. Exclusion rates are particularly high for disadvantaged, EAL and special educational needs and/or disabilities cohorts. This, coupled with the pattern of poor attendance for these students, slows their progress in learning and increases their vulnerability when they are not in the academy.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders are ensuring subject leaders, particularly those new in post, are developing the necessary skills to improve the quality of teaching and accelerate students' progress. Subject leaders appreciate this support and their confidence and involvement in monitoring the quality of their departments are increasing. They have access to regular, high-quality professional development as well as coaching and mentoring from the wider Outwood Grange Academy Trust leadership.

Governors have developed regular and robust processes that enable them to hold academy leaders to account for specific aspects of their work. For example, a recent review of attendance data raised governors' concerns and required an increased focus to be given to this area. Newly recruited governors are increasing the range of expertise available to the academy and strengthening engagement with the local

community. A thorough induction process enables them to quickly become effective in their role.

A curriculum review has been undertaken to ensure that the range of subjects and courses provided, particularly at Key Stage 4, successfully prepares students for future study, training and employment. A staffing model, including costings, is in the process of being agreed, this will ensure the academy has the appropriate teachers to deliver the curriculum from September 2015. Teachers are planning courses, sometimes across the Outwood Grange Academy Trust, to ensure that the curriculum successfully prepares students for life in modern Britain. Recent investment in the academy's accommodation has improved the range of activities that students can undertake in lessons. This is particularly evident in science where practical work can now be a regular part of learning.

The review of the academy's use of the pupil premium (additional government money) has now been completed and an action plan has been produced as a result of its recommendations. A number of key documents have been shared with staff and regular training events are taking place that focus on improving classroom practice. An evaluation process that enables subject leaders to analyse gaps between the progress of disadvantaged students and others is being prepared. There is an urgent need to bring together all the data relating to disadvantaged students, including attendance and exclusions information, so that the impact of actions taken can be sharply and accurately evaluated.

External support

The Outwood Grange Academy Trust continues to provide long-term support. This takes the form of directors of subjects working alongside middle leaders to provide ongoing coaching and development. The Outwood Grange Academy Trust also provides a wide range of professional development and training opportunities for teachers. A local authority officer has recently undertaken the pupil premium review and is also providing support for the academy's provision for EAL students and to improve attendance.