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Clare Mills
Interim Principal
Park View School the Academy of Mathematics and Science
Naseby Road
Alum Rock
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Dear Ms Mills

Special measures monitoring inspection of Park View School the Academy of Mathematics and Science

Following my visit with James McNeillie, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 25–26 February 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 school'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 March 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 school 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, subject to prior consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector.

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 Trustees, the Academies Advisers Unit and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve systems for safeguarding students so that statutory requirements are met and statutory guidance is fully adhered to by:
 - governors checking annually that all statutory safeguarding requirements are met and that all statutory guidance is followed
 - providing all staff with appropriate training in all aspects of safeguarding
 - extending the use of 'Prevent' strategies to raise students' awareness about the risks of extremism
 - making sure that the child protection policy for dealing with allegations against staff reflects updated statutory guidance
 - including arrangements for dealing with allegations of abuse against leaders and managers in the child protection policy
 - stating how the child protection policy will be reviewed and revised.

- Ensure leadership and management are effective by:
 - securing equality of opportunity for all staff and students
 - clarifying the different responsibilities of leaders and governors
 - developing systems to ensure that all aspects of the academy's work are rigorously monitored, evaluated and used to make improvements, including those for recruitment and promotion
 - setting out clearly the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating all academy policies.

- Review the academy's curriculum and programmes for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development that:
 - ensures students' learning has sufficient breadth, balance and coverage of all aspects of their personal development, including how to stay safe
 - fully prepares students for life in modern Britain and a multi-cultural society
 - raises students' awareness around the risks of extremism.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all groups achieve equally well by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan opportunities to stretch the most able students and meet the needs of those who require additional help
 - marking of students' work gives an indication of strengths, provides advice on how to make improvements and checks whether students have acted on previous advice.

External reviews of governance and of the academy's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 25–26 February 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive principal, the interim principal, senior leaders, groups of students, a group of parents, a representative from the governing body, and representatives from the board of trustees. Her Majesty's Inspectors observed parts of lessons, scrutinised a range of documents, including action plans, information about progress made by students, governing body minutes, attendance and exclusion records, 69 staff questionnaires and records showing how the academy cares for its students and keeps them safe.

Context

Since the last inspection, two class teachers and one member of the support staff have left the academy. Eight new appointments have been made, including an interim principal and three assistant principals. The board of trustees and executive principal are working with the Department for Education to find a long-term solution for the future of the academy.

Her Majesty's Inspectors were aware during the inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the academy in response to the allegations were considered, alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection, to inform inspectors' judgements.

Achievement of pupils at the school

There remains a lack of clarity about performance data across the academy. Leaders are still developing systems to ensure that all data are accurate for all students. Current data held by the academy indicate that there is considerable gap between the academy's end-of-year targets and the levels at which Year 11 students are currently working. As a result, a programme of interventions has been put in place to support students in making better progress but there is no evidence yet to show the impact of these interventions.

Students in Year 11 who are eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional funding provided by the government for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in public care) make better progress than their peers. However, this is not replicated in other year groups. Leaders and governors do not monitor the impact of the pupil premium across all year groups.

Overall, students' achievement is beginning to improve because students have better attitudes to learning. Some students do not make enough progress in lessons because poor literacy skills inhibit their learning. Additionally some teachers have low expectations of students' capabilities.

The quality of teaching

Overall, the quality of teaching has improved. Students agree. They say that students show better attitudes in lessons and there is less disruption to their learning as a consequence.

Some parents who spoke to Her Majesty's Inspectors shared their view that the quality of teaching remains a concern. They feel there are still too many teachers who are not permanent members of staff. Through a well-considered approach, senior leaders have reduced the number of temporary teachers working in the academy. For example, the way in which students are grouped according to ability has altered, reducing the need for so many class groups. As a result, students' attitudes to learning are improving.

A well-planned programme of professional development is in place for teachers to help them improve their teaching. In some cases, this is making a difference, but the quality of teaching shows considerable variance. There is some effective teaching in the academy, but too much remains weak.

When teaching is effective, teachers think carefully about how they question students so that the questions they ask help students to develop their understanding. Teachers also use the assessments of what students have achieved to make sure that the work they give students is appropriately challenging. High aspirations drive effective teaching with some teachers encouraging students to achieve their full potential.

When teaching is less effective, teachers do not have high expectations of what students can achieve. There is an over-reliance on the use of textbooks, and teachers do not fully take into account students' prior learning.

Students' literacy skills are not developed enough and students are not given sufficient opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects. This is because teachers do not focus enough on improving students' literacy skills.

Marking is variable, ranging to skilful marking which supports students in how to improve, to some work which is not marked at all.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour has improved since the last monitoring inspection. There is a calmer, more orderly atmosphere around the academy and students report that behaviour has recently improved. Students are well mannered and polite. They mostly show respect for each other. There remain some instances when students are not courteous to temporary teachers and do not give them the consideration they should.

Leaders have implemented a new behaviour system, which is understood by staff and students. The criteria of what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviours are now clearer, and immediate detentions are given when students do not conform to the academy's rules.

Students report they feel safe in the academy and they say that bullying is rare and is tackled quickly and effectively. Approximately three quarters of the staff who responded to the questionnaire believe that students' behaviour is good and well managed.

The executive principal has commissioned an independent audit of the academy's processes and record keeping in relation to child protection. This audit, confirmed by Her Majesty's Inspectors' own evidence, shows that the academy's approaches to keeping children safe are appropriate. Vulnerable students are well known and supported by the pastoral leader and support staff. However, the audit has found weaknesses in the academy's record keeping. Immediate action has been taken to begin to resolve this.

Attendance figures have declined slightly but are in line with the national average. Staff who monitor attendance know the students well and have robust systems to encourage students to attend regularly. The academy has effective systems to report missing students to the local authority. However, the academy voiced serious concerns that referrals are not acted upon quickly enough by the local authority and it receives very little information about what has been done to ensure that missing students are safe.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive principal and trustees are working through well thought-out plans to improve the academy. They have made sensible decisions, including appointing new senior leaders to provide momentum for change. The executive principal is working tirelessly to resolve some of the deep-seated problems and he has a very good understanding of the challenges that still remain.

New systems, procedures and policies have been implemented; for example, ways to track students' progress, departmental checks and evaluation of students' behaviour. As these improvements are very recent, it is too early to see if they are effective.

Heads of department are optimistic about the recent changes. They feel well supported by senior leaders and report they have been given the opportunity to develop and improve their subject areas. They are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring the performance of their departments through learning walks, book scrutinies and collaborative planning sessions.

The governing body is now fully formed. Careful selection and recruitment procedures have been followed to ensure that governors bring a range of suitable skills. Governors have received training about how to keep students safe from the risks of extremism and radicalisation. The Chair of the Governing Body has spent a considerable amount of time in the academy and is working to engage with parents. However, for some governors, there is lack of understanding of students' achievement data and a lack of clarity about how well funding is used to support students' progress. This is especially the case for disadvantaged students for whom the academy receives the pupil premium.

Work continues to develop the curriculum at Park View. Leaders have mapped out how British values will be taught from Year 7 to Year 11. The academy has appointed a new leader for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum. The current provision has been evaluated and plans to improve it further are underway. The policy on sex and relationships education has been written, but not ratified or shared widely. Sex and relationships are still not taught, but issues such as homophobia and safe relationships are taught through the personal development curriculum.

Despite these improvements, approximately a quarter of staff who responded to the questionnaire do not believe that the academy is well led and managed.

External support

The Department for Education is now working more closely with the academy. It has developed links with outstanding schools and is working with trustees to find a long-term solution for the future of the academy. The local authority has supported the development of the religious education curriculum through a scrutiny of the provision in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The resilience officer at the local authority is working closely with staff and governors on safeguarding issues.