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26 March 2015

Mrs K Godsall
Principal
The New Forest Academy
Long Lane
Southampton
SO45 2PA

Dear Mrs Godsall

Special measures monitoring inspection of The New Forest Academy

Following my visit with Mary Hoather, additional inspector, to your academy on 24 and 25 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 third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2013. 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, and may continue to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Management Board, the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire, the Education Funding Agency, and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2013

- Improve teaching so that it is good or better by consistently checking that all teachers:
 - set and mark homework regularly, give students clear advice about how they can improve their work and plan time for them to absorb and respond to the comments they receive
 - explore the meaning of subject-specific and general words in all subjects and extend students' vocabulary and writing skills
 - provide work which matches students' different abilities, including in classes which are setted
 - observe and learn from the high-quality teaching that exists in the academy.
- Increase progress to raise standards by ensuring that:
 - the percentage of students attaining five GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, matches the national average in 2014
 - all students, particularly the most able, aim for and attain higher GCSE grades and the percentage of A*/A grades rises
 - the gap between boys' and girls' achievement is narrowed to at least that seen nationally
 - students supported by the pupil premium make the same good progress they have made in Key Stage 3 when they move into Key Stage 4
 - progress is more rapid in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, particularly for students with special educational needs
 - steps are taken to address underachievement in subjects which performed significantly below the national average in 2013.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that senior leaders:
 - are realistic about the academy's performance and energetically seek to improve it
 - confirm standards and levels of progress by supporting and analysing middle leaders' work and using external support to check their predictions for students' progress are correct
 - act swiftly when underachievement is identified
 - extend the content of professional development for middle leaders and teachers
 - sharpen their assessment of the quality of teaching and learning
 - work more effectively with staff to eliminate any unacceptable student behaviour.
- Meet all statutory requirements for safeguarding by senior leaders and governors by:
 - checking regularly that the single central register is complete and up to date
 - reviewing the child protection policy annually
 - improving the quality of training on safeguarding and child protection and ensure that all staff receive it

- sharpening the analysis and records on behaviour, bullying and racist incidents, children on the child protection register, children of concern and students whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 March 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised planning and evaluation documents and met with the Principal, the Executive Principal, other senior staff and middle leaders, representatives of the management board, the regional director of the sponsor Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), and groups of students. Seventeen lessons were observed, most of them jointly with senior staff, and shorter visits to eight other lessons were undertaken.

Context

The academy has decided not to recruit students into the sixth form in September 2015.

Achievement of students at the academy

The quality of students' learning in the majority of subjects is improving. Achievement is now strong in English where the proportion of students in Year 11 making at least expected progress by the end of Key Stage 4 is anticipated to be higher than the national average. Improvements in students' achievements in mathematics are slower: the proportion making the progress expected of them is still low because of the impact of previously poor teaching and learning in this subject, and very few students are making good progress.

Faster and more secure learning is evident in a range of other subjects now, including in science and languages. In one science lesson observed, students were able to link prior learning about digestion and catalysts to some challenging work on the effect of enzymes used in washing powders. There were high expectations from the teacher and some very well-targeted support for individuals. In a French lesson, students were observed exploring the literal and cultural meanings of an advertisement in a lesson that offered good levels of challenge and support.

Groups of students who have previously not done well are now making better progress. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are now given useful extra help, support and encouragement. As a consequence, more are now making at least the progress expected of them. This means that some previously large gaps between the achievement of this group and that of other students are closing. The quality of learning of students with disabilities or special educational needs is improving as a result of much better organised provision across the academy for them. Some teachers have begun putting into practice the training recently provided to help these students to learn well. Boys are still achieving less well than girls, but the academy is confident that the gap in the proportion achieving five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, in 2014 is set to reduce in 2015.

As a result of these gains in learning, the academy is expecting the proportion of current Year 11 students gaining at least grade C in five or more subjects, including English and mathematics, to improve significantly this summer. The proportion of qualifications at the highest grades is expected to increase also. These improvements are especially marked in English, where the academy is expecting over 80% of grades to be C or better in 2015, with a gap between boys and girls of only a few percentage points. Improvements from 2014 in mathematics are not as great but the proportion of students achieving a grade C is expected to be more in line with the national average; only modest gains are expected at the highest grades of A* and A, however.

Many students' literacy skills remain below average. The academy is well aware of this and has undertaken a thorough review of its work in this area with a view to boosting students' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in all subjects. The impact of this work has not been formally evaluated yet.

All of the seven students in the sixth form are expected to achieve Level 2 qualifications this summer. There are very few subjects on offer. They are GCSEs in English and mathematics for those students who did not achieve a grade C or better in their Year 11, GCSE photography, and BTEC Level 2 qualifications.

The quality of teaching

More of the teaching in the academy is now offering good levels of challenge and support to raise students' achievement. The best teaching continually checks students' understanding of key ideas throughout lessons by close questioning and other means, and responds by revisiting ideas covered, or accelerating students on to more demanding work to take their learning further. However, too much teaching still over-emphasises the completion of activities and tasks and does not prioritise the quality of students' learning. When this happens, the real point of the learning can be lost and students do what is asked of them without gaining any real insight into the subject matter.

Expectations of students' achievements and behaviour are higher. Individual targets set in each subjects, regularly reviewed, are supporting faster progress. Still more could be asked in some subjects, for example in some history and geography lessons, especially in terms of the sophistication and depth of insight demanded of students. Students' better behaviour now gives teachers the capacity to develop a wider range of teaching styles and strategies, and the best teaching is taking advantage of this and, in the process, further improving students' approaches to learning.

Most activities given to students are well suited to their needs but there is still too little work which has been specially adapted for groups to provide specific challenge, address weaknesses in learning, or meet individuals' particular needs.

Many students appreciate the better quality of marking and feedback now from their teachers. Strengths and development needs are clearly highlighted, and students are often given time at the beginning of lessons to respond and improve their work. Those parents who provided information on Parent View expressed satisfaction with the amount of homework currently given to students.

Behaviour and safety of students

The majority of students now behave well in lessons. Although some students are happy to contribute their ideas and supply answers, many remain reticent about speaking up or asking for further clarification of an idea because not enough of the teaching promotes this as a necessary part of good learning.

Students are still concerned about the impact of some low-level disruption on their learning in about a quarter of their lessons. There remain high numbers of detentions as a response to this. However, expectations have risen and the majority of students now want to make good progress. The poor behaviour of a few is no longer tolerated; this is just one way in which an increasing sense of pride in the academy is demonstrated by many students. The attendance of all groups of students is closely monitored and is improving as a result of a wide range of responses to unauthorised absence. The number of exclusions is reducing.

Students behave well around the site at break and lunchtime, chatting in small friendship groups or playing on the courts. Bullying is rare and students say that staff are very good at dealing with any relationship problems, and help them to stay safe. A high proportion of parents who responded to Parent View are pleased with standards of behaviour in the academy now, and students spoken with during the visit agreed that it is much better.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The Principal continues to lead the academy strongly. She communicates her vision clearly and she is determined to secure the confidence of students, parents and the community in the academy's work. She is supported effectively by senior leaders, who now have well-defined areas of responsibility. Students attribute improvements evident in the academy over the last year to the better leadership. As one student said, 'It's all about success and aiming high, now!'

Leaders have significantly improved the provision for students with disabilities or special educational needs since the last visit. After a careful audit of staff skills, and

a consideration of the impact of new legislation, there was an extensive reorganisation of roles and responsibilities and high-quality training provided for teachers and teaching assistants. The result is provision which now has the potential to drive consistently good progress, and support the welfare needs of these students.

Similar high levels of attention have been given to the needs of disadvantaged students. There is now a wide range of support strategies in place to ensure that they catch up on previously slower learning, and indications of faster progress across a range of subjects as a result.

Senior leaders monitor the progress of all groups of students who may be vulnerable to underachievement very closely, and have high-quality and up-to-date information about the performance of every student in each of their subjects. This data is now based on good-quality assessment information. It is used to ensure strong and clear lines of accountability of all teachers for the progress of their classes. Many middle leaders are beginning to use this performance data to direct support and challenge and manage the performance of teachers.

Leaders' accurate sense of the academy's strengths and areas for improvement supports good development planning. Senior leaders continually monitor and evaluate the impact of initiatives and the quality of learning across the academy. Many of the new systems to support higher levels of achievement for all groups of students, including supporting higher levels of literacy, are now fully in place but the rigorous monitoring of the impact of their reliable and consistent implementation in every classroom is only just beginning.

The quality of teaching in the academy is judged reliably, and an analysis of development needs gives a good steer to staff training programmes. There are plans to reorganise training for teachers, addressing the need to make it more specific to individuals' needs, including providing more opportunities to learn from observing teaching that drives consistently good progress.

The academy's leaders are aware of some shortcoming in the promotion of equal opportunities and they are currently developing plans to prepare students better for life in modern Britain. This includes better education for staff and students about how other cultures and religions, and the expression of different sexual preferences, may be shown respect and value. The forthcoming 'mock election' has the capacity to develop students' understanding of democracy.

The academy's safeguarding and child protection procedures are maintained to a good standard. Checks on the suitability of all staff and adults who come into contact with students are undertaken reliably, safeguarding and related policies are kept up to date, and appropriate training is provided for all staff, including specialist safeguarding and child protection training for key staff. Senior leaders maintain a

detailed knowledge of specific welfare issues of certain students, and take appropriate steps to ensure that all students are safe and well looked after.

The academy's management board continues to provide very good challenge and support to academy leaders. There is a wide range of skills represented on the board, and members now use the extensive information they have about the academy's performance to very good effect in meetings. They hold the academy's leaders to account assertively and positively.

External support

The sponsor AET continues to exercise very good levels of oversight of the academy's work and has provided strong and effective support. AET consultants have worked with senior leaders to improve provision for students who are disabled or have special educational needs, and in developing opportunities for disadvantaged students to achieve better. AET consultants have also worked in English and mathematics, offering useful training and support for leadership, and are supporting the mathematics revision conference at Southampton Football Club just before Easter, to be voluntarily attended by the vast majority of Year 11 students.

The Executive Principal, who is also assistant regional director for AET and is based at the academy one or two days per week, continues to provide good levels of support and challenge to the academy's leadership. He works with the Principal on strategic issues and also coordinates AET support for financial planning, human resources, computing infrastructure, and building developments. Two AET representatives sit on the academy's management board, including the chair, who provides strong leadership in this role.

Links with The Romsey School remain strong and supportive. Romsey School staff provide useful support for strategies to improve teaching and learning, and in their mentoring for newly qualified teachers. Staff sometimes move between the schools to support provision for classes. Two academy teachers attend a leadership development course organised by Romsey School. Members of the academy management board have worked with Romsey School governors on aspects of training.

Funding has recently been secured to begin work with Ringwood and Bransgore Teaching School Alliance, and plans are being established to define the extent of this work and the desired outcomes.