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30 April 2015

Mr Mark Watts
Head of School
Nottingham University Samworth Academy
Bramhall Road
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Nottingham
NG8 4HY

Dear Mr Watts

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Nottingham University
Samworth Academy**

Following my visit with Margaret Eldridge-Mrotzek, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 28–29 April 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 November 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.

I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint NQTs.

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 Education Funding Agency (EFA), the DfE Academies Advisers Unit, the

Chair of the Local Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Nottingham.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- The Secretary of State
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead and team inspectors.

Annex

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

- Strengthen teaching to good or better by:
 - eradicating the large proportion of inadequate teaching
 - providing staff with sharply focused coaching and training to address weaknesses and hold them to account to improve
 - improving marking and the use of individual targets, so students know what they are aiming for and how to improve their work
 - promoting the importance of homework and then ensuring that it is of high quality.

- Increase the rate of progress of all groups of pupils in all subjects by:
 - demonstrating higher expectations of what students should achieve by insisting on a high rate of work in every lesson
 - training teachers to use assessment information well to plan work that is tailored to meet the needs of all students and then check that they make good progress in lessons
 - holding teachers to account for giving disabled students and those who have special educational needs the help they require in lessons to overcome the barriers to learning that they experience
 - challenging the more-able students from the minute they walk into lessons to the end, so they are challenged to think harder and expected to produce work of a much higher quality.

- Improve the behaviour and safety of students by:
 - creating and implementing a strategic plan to reduce the exclusion rate and improve attendance
 - ensuring that teachers insist on much higher standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons
 - promoting spiritual and cultural development effectively through the curriculum.

- Strengthen leadership and governance at all levels by:
 - securing basic day-to-day management structures such as the timetable, so the academy runs smoothly
 - changing the staffing structure, so that it is fit for purpose and staff are rewarded appropriately for their teaching and leadership responsibilities
 - equipping leaders at all levels, initially senior leaders, with the necessary skills so that they can fulfil their responsibilities
 - establishing the purpose of the sixth form and then providing appropriate post-16 courses that meet the needs of students

- securing equality of opportunity for students by providing them with the courses, subjects and advice that they require to improve their future economic well-being
- ensuring that governors are much more rigorous in holding leaders to account for academy improvement
- making sure that pupil premium funding is spent appropriately to improve outcomes for those students it is intended for.

Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the academy. An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 28–29 April 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed 22 parts of lessons, including several tutor sessions. Most of the observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders from the academy. Inspectors met with the head of school; other senior leaders; representatives from the sponsors; subject leaders of English, mathematics and science; a group of teachers without leadership responsibilities; and heads of year. Several interviews were held with students. Inspectors took account of staff responses to a survey about teaching, leadership, and behaviour in the academy. Inspectors also scrutinised a range of academy documents, including statutory policies, students' achievement summaries and students' behaviour and attendance records.

During this monitoring visit, the sixth form was not evaluated because students in this phase of the academy were not following their usual timetables, due to examinations and other activities.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, three part-time teachers of mathematics, art and science have left the academy. The academy has recruited two part-time lead teachers in English and two newly qualified teachers of English and mathematics; these teachers will commence their employment in September.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Leaders and managers have continued to drive improvements in achievement. The academy's data for Year 11 students indicate that the students are currently making better progress than in previous years. For example, current rates of progress in English are much better than the national average. The students are also making better progress in mathematics than they did last year.

The students who have been entered for three GCSEs in science are currently making the progress needed to achieve higher-level grades. The students who are studying for two science GCSEs, however, are not making enough progress to reach the higher grades. That is because of the weak teaching they have experienced in the past. The science teachers have undertaken considerable work to tackle gaps in the students' knowledge and understanding, but the better-quality teaching this year has not been sufficient to enable students to catch up completely.

Disadvantaged students are making much more progress than ever before. Leaders carefully target the support these students receive. The attainment gap between disadvantaged students and other students in the school and nationally is closing. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. That is because the quality of teaching and support provided for these students is improving and is now good.

Students who have received additional support to improve their reading skills have all made excellent progress and improved their reading ages.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching and learning remains variable across the curriculum. Nevertheless, the inspectors found more evidence of good teaching than previously. Teachers are using data about students' progress to plan lessons. They understand the range of learning needs and abilities among students in their classes. Inspectors observed good progress and tasks that challenged learners in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, geography, Spanish and art. However, many teachers are not using the information about students effectively to cater for pupils of all levels of ability. In addition, the questions teachers ask in lessons do not always help students to deepen their understanding.

The quality of the teachers' marking and feedback to students remains inconsistent. Not all teachers ensure that their feedback to students leads to improved learning and progress.

All teachers now mark students' work regularly. Some departments, like mathematics and geography, have developed effective marking strategies. In these departments, students respond to the teachers' comments carefully and know exactly how they can improve.

Teachers are not using tutoring time in the morning effectively. Often, learning time is wasted during these sessions because teachers do not always teach students or carry out any meaningful activities.

Behaviour and safety of students

Students' attitudes to learning, while improving, are still variable across the academy. The students are mostly compliant in lessons and only occasionally off-task, but they are often not enthusiastic or fully engaged. A small proportion of students persistently arrives late to school and lessons, and disturbs the learning of others. These negative attitudes are hindering the progress of some learners.

Students' conduct around the academy is mostly orderly and respectful. Students are very clear about the behaviour policy. During interviews, students say that most teachers use the system well to tackle poor behaviour. Some leaders are not always insistent on high standards of behaviour around the academy, however. This makes it more difficult for other teachers to enforce the rules effectively.

Students' attendance to school is improving but remains below the national average. The proportion of students excluded from school has reduced; there are now fewer days lost to exclusions than ever before. The number of poor behaviour incidents in lessons is reducing.

Quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The head of school and the team of senior leaders have shown drive and determination which have brought about demonstrable improvements to teaching, behaviour and students' progress. Leaders know what still needs to be done to raise expectations among staff and students to achieve better progress.

Teachers are supported well to improve their practice. The programme of continuous professional development is well thought out and effective. Leaders are now planning more bespoke training opportunities to meet individual teaching needs. Newly qualified teachers are supported well by the academy.

Subject leaders for English, mathematics and science are growing in confidence. They are becoming more skilled at leading their teams and developing their subject curricula.

Heads of year are also improving their practice, with the support and guidance from senior leaders.

Leaders of special educational needs are skilled and knowledgeable. Their work has contributed to improved teaching and progress for students with additional needs.

The quality of the curriculum is improving. Students are now guided effectively to follow appropriate courses at Key Stage 4. Leaders are developing more opportunities for students to improve their spiritual, moral and cultural understanding.

Governors and sponsors continue to challenge academy leaders effectively. The introduction of focused meetings and regular visits to the academy help governors to understand the effectiveness of the work of the academy.

External support

The academy continues to draw extensively on the support provided by the family of academies within the Torch Academy Gateway Trust. This support has contributed to improved teaching across the academy. Key leaders from each academy sit on the 'Progress Board', which has begun to develop consistent assessment strategies across the trust. This work has helped to improve assessment practices, especially in the core subjects. Subject leaders and senior managers have developed their leadership skills as result of regular contact with outstanding practitioners from other academies. Nottingham University provides effective support for newly qualified teachers. Some teachers are also pursuing masters' degrees through the university. An external consultant provides important guidance for middle leaders, which has helped them to evaluate the quality of teaching more effectively.