

18 June 2015

Mrs Zoe Bidmead
Headteacher
Melior Community Academy
Chandos Road
Scunthorpe
Lincolnshire
DN17 1HA

Dear Mrs Bidmead

Special measures monitoring inspection of Melior Community Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 16 and 17 June 2015 with Janet Pruchniewicz, Additional Inspector, 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 second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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.

The academy is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to 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 Education Advisory Body and the sponsor.

Yours sincerely

Jane Willis

Associate inspector

Appointed as an Associate Inspector under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule V2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good and enables students to reach higher standards and achieve well, especially in English and mathematics, by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan and set work that matches the needs and abilities of students
 - have high expectations of what students can achieve
 - require students to act upon the advice given in marking to improve their progress and attitudes to learning
 - check carefully students' understanding of what they are learning by asking searching questions
 - swiftly review students' work, especially that of boys, during lessons to make sure they are engaged with the tasks set and that they are making good progress
 - improve, check and modify, when necessary, students' attitudes to learning
 - support the development of English and mathematical skills in all subjects.

- Urgently improve the impact of leadership, management and governance by acting swiftly to ensure:
 - that leaders at all levels, including governors, relentlessly focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning to eradicate that which presently requires improvement or is inadequate
 - that all subject leaders provide accurate assessment information to senior leaders and governors so that underachieving students can be identified swiftly and appropriate actions taken to improve their learning
 - that all subject leaders make sure that academy policies are carried out effectively to ensure greater consistency in the quality of marking and teaching
 - rigorous checking of the impact of the curriculum in meeting the needs of all students
 - that reading and writing skills are developed strongly in all year groups across the whole of the school's curriculum
 - that pupil premium funding is used effectively to overcome barriers to developing higher standards and better achievement
 - governors and the sponsor have robust systems to check the accuracy and validity of information they receive in order to hold the academy to account.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 16 to 17 June 2015.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, the regional director of the School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA), governors, members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders and students. The inspectors observed 19 part lessons where they scrutinised books.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, three members of the support staff have left the academy and a head of modern foreign languages has been appointed. The academy has restructured so that there are five phase leaders, one over each year group.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

The quality of assessment in the academy is improving, because more stringent checks are now in place to ensure the accuracy of the data on students' performance. Senior leaders have a much clearer picture about students' progress and their attainment because they have introduced examinations for all year groups and trained staff to use the new tracking system. The tracking system allows both staff and students to monitor progress. The 'war room' that the academy has set up allows both the students and the staff to see clearly how they are progressing. The students are now able to talk about what level they are working at. However, they cannot consistently talk about what they need to do to move to the next level.

The academy's tracking for the GCSE results in 2015 indicates that the proportion of students leaving the academy with five A* to C grades at GCSE level will increase from 2014 but that the proportion will still be below the floor standards; the floor standards are the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11. The data clearly show that there are still wide gaps in the level of attainment for different student groups and in different subjects. English is performing better than mathematics, girls are performing better than boys and the non-disadvantaged are performing better than the disadvantaged in all year groups.

Students are beginning to make better progress in English. The academy has invested heavily in a number of reading and literacy schemes and these have been accurately targeted at the students' needs. Reading ages have increased from between a matter of months to three and even four years. Students, who have been on the programmes are more confident and willing to read out loud. All staff follow the academy's literacy strategy and are helping students by the use of, for example, writing frames so that they can improve their written skills. Writing, however, remains an area requiring improvement.

Progress in mathematics remains inadequate. The academy has been unable to recruit mathematics teachers and, so, many students have previously had supply teachers, which has hindered their learning. The staffing has been more stable this year but the academy has had to be strategic with the mathematics staffing and has restructured the timetable for September 2015 to ensure that all teaching groups have a mathematics teacher. The data indicate that the greater stability in staffing is starting to narrow the gap between the students in the academy and students nationally.

The quality of teaching

The academy recognises that teaching still needs to improve. The senior team have ensured that there is a targeted programme of professional development to support teachers' skills in the classroom. Senior and middle leaders talk about the staff having higher expectations of students. In a number of lessons this was evident where teachers insisted that the students perform at a high level, for example in an art lesson where students were working independently on creating their own piece of artwork based around shoes.

The teachers have the data for their classes so that they can identify the gaps in attainment for different groups and put in targeted interventions for particular students. Conversations between teachers and their learning leaders happen on a regular basis to review interventions, but as yet the impact on progress is inconsistent. All staff are using a four part lesson plan which includes objectives, success criteria and levelled outcomes to help them to set work that matches students' capabilities. The impact of this is still inconsistent as the work set does not always match the ability of the different groups within a class and can sometimes limit the students' work.

In the best learning seen, students are engaged and the teachers are using the data to help them to differentiate the work they are giving to the students. In these lessons, the teachers use questioning to develop the students' understanding. In lessons where there is less challenge and the match of learning to students' needs is not good enough, students do not focus on their work and the teachers do not always use questioning to check learning. Occasionally the behaviour of students in lessons can be challenging.

Marking and feedback have improved and this is particularly noticeable since January 2015. While it remains inconsistent, the students are beginning to respond to teachers' comments in their books and they say that this is helping them to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

When moving about the academy students are generally well mannered and move safely. In the main they are polite and pleasant. They are positive about the behaviour in the academy and in lessons. They feel that behaviour has improved because of the use of the behaviour policy, although some teachers are still inconsistent and the students would like to see more awards given. They do not feel that bullying is a problem.

On the whole, students are punctual in arriving at the academy in the morning and in moving between lessons. Some of the older students are not always as quick to move into lessons but academy staff monitor this.

Overall absence and persistent absence have increased. The absence of disadvantaged students is of particular concern, especially in Years 9 and 10, as this group is making less than expected progress. The academy's leaders are aware of this and are putting in strategies, which include linking the attendance of the students to their attainment and progress so that interventions are appropriate to a student's needs

Exclusions have increased because of a zero tolerance approach. Behaviour cards and the three behaviour support rooms are used well to support students to improve. Leaders are using data broken down by groups to plan behaviour interventions.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The Principal and the leadership team demonstrate a collective ambition for the academy. However, the academy's leaders are pragmatic enough to recognise the magnitude of the task they face to get the academy to good within the prescribed timescales. Leaders and managers are much more aware of the need to tackle weak teaching and ensure students achieve well enough. However, because of the changes at leadership level over the autumn term and the restructuring of some leadership posts, in-depth work to tackle these areas did not start until the spring term. This has limited the impact.

Leaders have put in clear lines of accountability and all the staff are aware of the need to raise standards. Much work has gone into targeting intervention work at particular students, although leaders are not always clear about what impact these initiatives are having. Additional government funding (the pupil premium) is being used to help disadvantaged students and there is evidence that this is starting to help them to make progress.

The curriculum has been restructured so that it fully meets the needs of students and will enable them to achieve well and prepare them for the future.

Governors are now more able to hold the academy to account. They have undergone training on areas such as the data dashboard and on work scrutiny, although the review of governance has only just started. One example of their work is their link to departments where they review progress with the lead learner and look at next steps. The governors are clear on the areas of concern within the academy and the minutes of their meetings show that they are challenging leaders.

External support

The regional director of the SPTA regularly visits the academy to support the Principal. The trust has brought in external consultants to work alongside the staff; for example, a consultant has worked with the subject leaders on their schemes of learning and a headteacher, who has undertaken a review of the use and impact of the pupil premium. The consultants have made a positive impact on the curriculum offer and on the progress of students. An external consultant for mathematics has been engaged for one day a week from September 2015 in order to strengthen the department.