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Mr P Loveday
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Dear Mr Loveday

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bridgnorth Endowed School

Following my visit with Robert Steed and Nigel Griffiths, Ofsted Inspectors, to your academy on 18 and 19 November, 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 October 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action 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 without first discussing this with me.

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 of Children's Services for Shropshire.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching, especially in English, mathematics and science, so that all students experience teaching which accelerates their progress by:
 - making sure that work is marked correctly and teacher assessments are accurate
 - improving the quality of feedback given to students so that corrections can be done quickly and more time is spent in filling gaps in learning or challenging students to think harder about their work
 - planning work that builds on what students already know, using accurate assessment information to guide this
 - making sure that all students, in particular the most-able, are given work that is hard enough to make them have to think about what they are doing and keep them interested
 - making sure that the least-able can make progress without being overly reliant on help from the teacher or others.
- Make sure that more students, including those that are disadvantaged, make at least the progress they should in English and mathematics, and in the sixth form, through:
 - more frequent and accurate checks on their learning
 - providing precisely targeted work to fill gaps in their learning where these are identified.
- Carry out an urgent review of the curriculum for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 to ensure that:
 - no more students are entered for GCSE examinations before they are ready to achieve the top grades
 - where students have already achieved grades below the top grades, they are provided with opportunities to continue with these subjects and to deepen their knowledge to prepare them better for study post-16.
- Improve leadership at all levels, including governance, so that this becomes more strategic by:
 - making sure all leaders have the necessary skills and understanding to be able to use assessment information to quickly identify where things are going wrong
 - improving the accuracy of leaders' evaluations of the work of the school including using information about students' achievement in judging the quality of teaching
 - regularly reviewing information on behaviour and attendance, in particular that of disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or who have

special educational needs, and checking the ways to improve behaviour and attendance are actually making a difference.

An external review of governance, and of the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 18–19 November 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, middle leaders, subject teachers, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

During this monitoring visit, inspectors were aware that the local authority is currently conducting an investigation into the academy's safeguarding arrangements as a result of a complaint. Her Majesty's Inspector met with a local authority officer who shared initial findings and these were taken into account.

Since my last visit, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) has also taken responsibility for the progress of disadvantaged pupils and has joined the senior leadership team.

Outcomes for pupils

Progress in mathematics improved for all pupils in 2015 and is now likely to be in line with national averages. In mathematics, there has been a significant reduction in the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the academy and in the gaps between boys and girls. We agreed that it would be useful to identify the key actions that enabled these outcomes and ensure that the good practice is shared across all subjects, including English.

Achievement overall is improving, although more slowly than the academy had expected. This is because, while rates of progress in English improved in 2015, they were not as good as predicted and remain below the national average. This was particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils in this subject. However, leaders have quickly identified the issues that caused this and the head of English has taken appropriate action to ensure that current pupils are better prepared for the new GCSEs.

Rates of progress for current pupils in the academy are continuing to improve for all year groups in English and mathematics. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making particularly good progress from their starting points. This is because the SENCO is rigorous in tracking their progress and ensuring that additional support is appropriate and well balanced with the rest of their curriculum. We agreed that next steps are to ensure that systems are in place to enable measurement of the impact of individual interventions. In turn, this will inform future

planning and allow comparisons of progress to be made between current and previous year groups so that actions taken can be effectively evaluated.

Records kept by the SENCO suggest that disadvantaged pupils are now making up lost ground in most year groups, including in English. However, we agreed that more needs to be done to improve the rates of progress for the most-able pupils across the academy, including those who are disadvantaged.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching across the academy, including in the sixth form, is continuing to improve. All teachers have good subject knowledge and inspectors did not see any evidence of inadequate teaching over time in any subject. This is because leaders have established more regular and effective monitoring systems that enable them to identify where there may be problems and therefore put appropriate support in place.

All teachers now plan their lessons well, taking assessment outcomes into account so that they have a clear view of the level of challenge required for different abilities. The academy has introduced 'ski runs' following a successful trial by the mathematics department last academic year. These identify different levels of challenge. Where these are used well, they are very effective in stretching all pupils, particularly the most able. However, in many lessons, inspectors noted that pupils were allowed to choose the level of challenge and too few teachers directed pupils to the challenge most appropriate to them. Moreover, in most cases, all pupils started a task at the same level regardless of their ability. Thus, many of the most able do not make the progress they could.

Questioning is often used well to encourage pupils to develop their ideas, to express these coherently, to make use of a wide vocabulary and to use standard English where appropriate. However, although the academy has a policy of 'no hands up' to ensure that not only those who already know an answer are called upon, inspectors noted that the majority of teachers asked questions of those who did have their hands up. Consequently, pupils who were less confident to participate or who were unsure of answers were allowed to remain unchallenged.

In nearly all lessons, inspectors saw good support for literacy. The use of literacy 'maps' in all subjects is helping pupils to make more independent choices about how they use language. In English the 'word of the week' and 'mis-spelling' of the week' are having a positive impact on pupils' understanding of the importance of correct spelling. However, this aspect of literacy is not always reinforced in all subject areas.

In some lessons, for instance physical education, teachers made very effective use of modelling so that pupils understood quickly what they needed to do and how to

do it. In this subject it was notable how well pupils collaborated, supporting each other to achieve the objectives set.

Assessment is now more accurate and all pupils know their targets. However, they do not necessarily understand how well they are progressing towards these. Moreover, when asked what they would need to do to exceed their target grade, most of those spoken to were unsure and the most common answer was that they would need to work harder. This is because not all teachers are consistently applying the academy's marking policy which requires that teachers clearly identify what pupils have done well and how they can improve further.

Teaching assistants are well trained and knowledgeable about their pupils' needs and abilities. They provide tailored support and focus effectively on encouraging pupils to become more independent. We discussed how their impact could be further increased through developing opportunities for these staff to work more closely with subject teachers at the planning stage of lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Better monitoring and analysis of behaviour and higher expectations have had a positive impact on reducing fixed-term exclusions. The academy's records show a significant reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour across the academy and particularly during lesson times.

In the vast majority of lessons, pupils demonstrate good attitudes to their learning. They arrive on time, with the correct equipment and usually settle quickly and willingly to work. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils so that low-level disruption is infrequent. When it does occur, teachers usually deal with it quickly so that the learning of others is not interrupted. However, we agreed that it would be useful, especially for new staff, to clarify each stage of the behaviour management process, for instance at which point a teacher should refer behaviour issues to a middle leader for assistance and at what point continued intransigence should be referred to senior leaders.

A new rewards system has been introduced and explained to pupils. You and your leaders are very clear that you want pupils to work towards rewards rather than avoid sanctions. We agreed that this should be added to the behaviour policy so that, in line with the improvements secured, this emphasis on rewarding good behaviour is made clearer.

All the pupils spoken to during the monitoring inspection said that they felt safe and well supported. A number gave examples of how their teachers had helped them to overcome problems and to 'get back on track' with their learning. Although rare, pupils agreed that bullying occasionally happens. However, they all stated that it was

dealt with quickly and effectively. Consequently, they feel confident to go to any member of staff, including senior leaders, if they have a problem.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development opportunities are now carefully planned and permeate the whole curriculum. In addition to the programme of assemblies, SMSC is a feature in personal, social and health education, religious education and core studies. Teachers also identify regular opportunities to reinforce this in their subject lessons. As a result, pupils spoken to had a good understanding of democracy and what it means and could relate this to everyday life in Britain, comparing their experience of life with that of other cultures and traditions. They understand the concept of justice and the law.

Records show that attendance has continued to improve in all year groups and for all groups of pupils. However, there are issues with the ways in which attendance of sixth form pupils has been recorded which the academy is working to address as a matter of urgency.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders know the strengths and areas for development in the academy and can demonstrate the impact they have had and are having on improving teaching and outcomes for pupils. The systems, processes and reviews that had been implemented at my last visit are now much more embedded. For instance, the review of the curriculum, leading to the new model and a return to a two-year Key Stage 4, has been popular with staff and pupils alike. The different pathways developed are meeting the needs of pupils better so that rates of progress are improving.

Middle leadership has been strengthened, particularly in mathematics and English. These leaders are more aware of their roles and responsibilities and their primary focus is on the achievement of pupils in their areas of responsibility. You have introduced a bi-weekly 'intervention meeting', attended by the SENCO and the leaders of mathematics and English. Although in its early days, this is beginning to show signs of having a real impact on tackling gaps in achievement for disadvantaged pupils, because good practice is being shared, common issues are identified and joint planning to overcome these is taking place.

The leadership of the sixth form is less clear. Roles and responsibilities are shared between a senior leader and a middle leader, whose main focus is on personal development and welfare. While the model established has its strengths, a result of this is that the everyday leadership of the sixth form is not always as focused as it could be on improving the academic progress of learners.

Assessment is now more accurate. However, the systems currently under development to record rates of progress using the new national 1–9 grading system

are not yet working well enough. At this point, there is not enough clarity around what any particular level in a subject will look like, although there is work currently taking place to help with this and with developing a stronger understanding of how each level in the system relates to the academy's age-related expectations. This needs to be accelerated so that leaders can continue the good work already being done to rapidly identify pupils who are underperforming.

We discussed, and agreed, that the academy would benefit from a programme of review activities to check the effectiveness of recently introduced systems so that every opportunity is taken to refine and sharpen their impact.

Much of the academy's documentation is very detailed, including the improvement plan which identifies all areas for improvement. It would be useful, however, for leaders to consider simplifying this, and other documents, to clarify which are the key priorities and how responsibilities for monitoring their effectiveness have been delegated and accountability identified.

Governance has improved. The restructure of committees has ensured that governors are now focusing on the key areas for improvement. They have received appropriate training so that there is a better understanding of the range of information presented to them. Minutes show that governors are now much better informed and are asking relevant and challenging questions. Governors meet their statutory duties. However, they still need to develop a more detailed knowledge and understanding of how some funding is being used and its impact on improving outcomes for key groups of pupils.

External support

External support has been effective in helping leaders to improve specific areas such as improvement planning and assessment. However, currently it is too ad hoc to ensure that leaders can then measure its overall impact on increasing capacity for further improvement. You have recognised this and funding for a school-to-school agreement with a local outstanding school is being sought. We agreed that this must be formalised through a clear plan of how such support will meet the academy's priorities.