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Ms Jane Bailey
Principal
South Shore Academy
St Anne's Road
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Dear Ms Bailey

Special measures monitoring inspection of South Shore Academy

Following my visit with Annette Patterson, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 17–18 January 2017, 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 that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

This inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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.

I am copying this letter to Len Hampson, chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and Mrs Delyth Curtis, the director of people for Blackpool Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2015.

- Ensure that all students' behaviour is at least good and that they are safe by:
 - improving their attendance and punctuality to school and eradicating truancy from lessons
 - making certain that procedures for checking the implementation of safeguarding policies and strategies are robust
 - encouraging students to have more respect for themselves and each other through a tailored programme of personal, social and health education that includes more information on how to stay safe online and challenges bullying and discrimination such as homophobia and racism.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good, and therefore significantly improve progress and raise attainment in all subjects and year groups by:
 - ensuring teachers' assessments of students' progress and attainment are consistently accurate
 - increasing the level of challenge in lessons for students at all ability levels so that they make much faster progress
 - ensuring all teachers consistently let students know how well they have done and how to improve
 - making certain that all teachers have high expectations of the presentation of work and the care that students should take over their books, as well as in the tasks they undertake
 - ensuring no student is disadvantaged by preparing tasks to support all students, so that even those who have been absent are able to fully participate in learning
 - eradicating low-level disruption by improving the rigour of application of the academy's behaviour policy in lessons and around the school.
- Rapidly improve the impact of leadership at all levels, including that of the trust and governors, so that the pace of improvement accelerates quickly by ensuring that:
 - all staff are held to account for the progress of the students in their lessons
 - systems for managing information on students' progress are refined so that leaders have accurate and useful information, which enable their efforts and support to be targeted to the students most at risk of underachieving
 - the pupil premium is spent effectively, and that its impact on students' progress is measured.

An external review of 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.

An external review of the governance of the academy should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 17 January to 18 January 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed 15 parts of lessons from across the core subjects of mathematics, English and science. They scrutinised a selection of work from a group of the most able pupils in Year 8 and Year 10 in these subjects, as well as in the humanities and languages. Inspectors scrutinised documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and information relating to pupils' achievement and to their behaviour and attendance. Inspectors checked on the school's safe recruitment arrangements. Inspectors met with two groups of pupils and spoke to other pupils during lessons and at break and lunchtime. They held a number of meetings with the principal, vice-principal and other senior staff. They also met with two representatives of the governing body and with a representative of Bright Futures Educational Trust, the school's sponsor.

Context

Six members of staff have left the school since the previous monitoring inspection, and four new teaching staff have joined. One new governor has been appointed, and sits on the school's finance committee. The school continues to admit pupils after the start of the academic year, with 57 pupils having joined since September 2016. The new school building remains on track for opening in September 2017.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders remain focused on the job to be done. They lead improvements with tenacity and are starting to build leadership capacity more widely across the school. However, subject leaders vary widely in their effectiveness. Some are now more able to analyse pupil progress information for themselves and identify priorities for improvement within their departments. Others remain reliant on senior leaders to direct improvement within their subject areas.

Leaders use progress information well to build a well-rounded, accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They have created a range of training programmes for teaching staff and provide individual coaching to those staff who need additional support. Leaders' records show that teaching continues to improve and that the greater number of 'lead teachers' within subjects, such as in English, is having an impact on raising expectations.

Leaders' analysis of the impact of funding for disadvantaged pupils is thorough. They now know the support that each pupil receives through this grant. The impact of the work the school does to improve the outcomes for these pupils can best be seen in their increased attendance and engagement with school life. While standards for these pupils are improving, they are not increasing sufficiently to

begin to close the gaps with their less-disadvantaged peers in school.

The school now has a small, yet stable and committed, group of governors in place. Newer appointments have brought in expertise in finance and education. One governor has played a significant role in enabling the English department to plan for effective transition from Year 6 into Year 7. However, meetings are not as effective as they should be. Agendas do not always reflect the school's priorities for action, nor are they timely enough. For example, the standards and effectiveness committee meetings are not scheduled to coincide with the outcomes of the school's assessment programme. Governors do not always receive key reports prior to meetings, so they do not have the time to evaluate reports beforehand in order to question and challenge the leadership team.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Since the last monitoring inspection, a number of teachers have joined or returned to the school. They have had a positive impact on improving teaching, for example in English, where their best practice is being used to develop others.

The majority of teachers have high expectations, follow the school's assessment policy and give up their time to support pupils in additional classes, which are held at the end of school for three days each week. Teachers' assessment is accurate and they provide helpful guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. However, the pressure of having to make up for previously lost time means that teachers are unable to give pupils the time to review and develop their work during the school day, nor do they make effective use of homework in order to build on the learning that takes place in class. This means that the guidance they give does not yet have an effective impact on improving learning across many subjects.

School leaders are developing a new approach to meeting the needs of the most able pupils through a group of expert teachers. This is in an early stage and the impact of this on the most able pupils' achievement is not yet evident.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Expectations are high for behaviour across the school. Established routines mean that pupils are punctual to school, the majority dress smartly and lessons start briskly. Poor behaviour no longer disrupts lessons, although there can be some low-level disruption when the work is too easy. Pupils are quick to comply with teachers' requests. Behaviour at break and lunchtimes is orderly and calm.

New and returning teachers confirm that pupils are positive about learning. Those pupils who spoke to inspectors agree and identify behaviour as the one of the most improved aspects of the school. This picture is also confirmed by the consistent reduction in the number of short-term exclusions. Since September, these have more than halved in comparison to the same period last year.

Attendance is increasing. Despite a spate of widespread illness before Christmas, current attendance for this academic year stands at 93.7%. Leaders have set an ambitious target of 95% for the year and the systems to track and intervene with individual pupils are proving to be effective.

The school has a number of programmes in place to raise awareness of mental health issues and to support pupils who may be affected by these. For example, a dedicated counsellor is employed by the school and a mental toughness syllabus is being delivered within tutor groups. The pastoral support for vulnerable pupils is a real strength of the school.

Outcomes for pupils

The government introduced new performance measures in 2016. Therefore, a year-on-year comparison is not possible.

For the first time, the school met the government's new secondary floor standard in 2016. This is the minimum level of progress expected for pupils across eight subjects by the end of Year 11. While attainment across these subjects remained low in comparison to the national average, both progress and attainment indicators show an improving trend.

Overall, these results reflected what leaders expected, although a few subject leaders were less successful in securing accurate teacher assessment. This was particularly the case in drama and science.

The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils improved in this year group, but not substantially enough to narrow the differences in achievement with their less-disadvantaged peers. This remains a common issue for current pupils at the school.

Achievement in science remains poor. While the 2016 GCSE examination results saw a slight improvement, this was minimal and from a low starting point. Achievement is low in comparison to other subjects and remains well below the national average. Improvements seen at the previous monitoring inspection have not been sustained. Pupils continue to make poor progress in this subject across the school.

The achievement of the most able pupils remains a significant key issue for the school. While there was an increase in the number of pupils attaining the higher GCSE grades last year, this was not representative of the performance of most-able pupils generally. Leaders have reorganised teaching groups to ensure that, in most lessons, the most able pupils are grouped together and sets are now organised appropriately, based on ability as opposed to behaviour. However, provision for the most able during day-to-day teaching is rudimentary. In many classes, work is too basic and does not provide these pupils with opportunities to tackle more demanding tasks or to develop their learning in any depth. This is particularly the

case in science.

External support

Since the previous monitoring inspection, school leaders have commissioned an external provider to conduct detailed evaluations of the English, mathematics and science departments. These have been very useful in supporting subject leaders to develop action plans for this academic year. The impact of these, however, has been variable.

The English department has spent time in one of the school's main feeder primary schools looking at the teaching of reading and the quality of writing. This has enabled staff to improve transition arrangements and to introduce programmes to promote reading across the school.