

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



5 July 2017

Clive Jones
Headteacher
Wednesfield High Specialist Engineering Academy
Lichfield Road
Wednesfield
Wolverhampton
West Midlands
WV11 3ES

Dear Mr Jones

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wednesfield High Specialist Engineering Academy

Following my visit with Jacqueline Newsome, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 20–21 June 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2017.

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.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing board, the chief executive officer of Education Central Multi Academy Trust (ECMAT), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wolverhampton. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2017.

- Take urgent and effective action to ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form are effective by:
 - ensuring that all the necessary checks on staff and relevant adults, including identity checks, are completed and recorded on the single central record
 - making certain that leaders in the school monitor these systems closely and are confident of their robustness
 - clarifying the extent to which staff appointments have followed safer recruitment procedures fully, making proper checks where procedures have not been followed
 - making sure that the use of unlawful exclusions ceases immediately
 - ensuring that pupils' attendance is recorded accurately and is carefully monitored
 - addressing the boisterous, disorderly and occasionally dangerous behaviour around the school site so that it is stopped
 - making robust checks on the personal development, behaviour, welfare, attendance and progress of pupils who are in alternative provision.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the multi-academy trust and governing body respond to the long-standing weaknesses in leadership and teaching in the school, with swift and effective support
 - extra funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who enter the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills is effectively used
 - leaders develop their ability to accurately evaluate the impact of the many carefully considered changes recently made to leadership structures on teaching, learning and assessment
 - teachers follow the school's marking and feedback policy closely
 - leaders reduce the use of non-specialist and short term staff, and recruit and retain high quality teachers in all subject areas.
- Improve attendance in the sixth form and in Years 7 to 11 of all pupils, but particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
 - carefully evaluating the impact of the current strategies used to improve the attendance of these groups to determine which are most effective
 - using national comparisons for attendance when making decisions about

whether attendance for groups is a cause for concern.

- Improve pupils' behaviour so that all pupils feel safe in school and poor behaviour does not disrupt lessons by:
 - developing consistency in teachers' approach to managing pupils' behaviour and providing effective support to teachers when behaviour problems occur
 - reducing bullying and pupils' fear that they will be bullied
 - reducing the number of pupils missing their lessons when they are in the on-site unit for short-term and long-term internal exclusions.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that outcomes accelerate for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information to match tasks to the ability level and knowledge of their pupils, making sure that work is not too easy or too hard.

External reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how these aspects of leadership and management might be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 20–21 June 2017

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, other staff and four groups of pupils. Meetings were also held with three governors, including the vice-chair of the local governing board and a member of the Education Central Multi Academy Trust (ECMAT) board of trustees. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of ECMAT.

Inspectors observed learning and behaviour during brief visits to lessons. They observed pupils at morning break and lunchtime and as they moved around the school. Inspectors spoke with many pupils about their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. Several documents were scrutinised including the school's interim improvement plan, self-evaluation, minutes of local governing board and trust board meetings, and the school's records about pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Context

The headteacher joined the school at the start of June 2017. Four teachers, including the head of English, have left the school since January and several others are set to leave at the end of term. The school is currently undergoing a restructuring of staffing that will stretch into the autumn term. Roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have been reviewed with several changes taking place, including a change to the designated safeguarding lead. The senior leadership team will reduce by one assistant headteacher in September. Leaders have successfully filled almost all vacancies and the school is set to be fully staffed in September.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since January's inspection, leaders have overseen a steady improvement in the school. The rate of improvement has accelerated with the appointment of the new headteacher. Weaknesses in safeguarding have been addressed, behaviour has improved and some improvement is apparent in teaching.

The school's interim improvement plan, drawn up with considerable support from ECMAT, is detailed and ambitious. Alongside the school's self-evaluation, it presents a realistic picture of the considerable amount of work that needs to be done to see the school improve. The initial trajectory of improvement has been positive, but leaders are acutely aware that there is still much to do, particularly in improving teaching so that pupils' progress improves.

January's inspection report identified several weaknesses in the school's safeguarding procedures. Leaders have rectified all of these. Procedures to recruit

staff safely are understood and used well. The school's single central record is complete and compliant. Staff carefully check the identity of all visitors to the school. Pupils' absences are now recorded correctly and pupils are no longer sent home unless formally excluded. Leaders make regular checks on the small number of pupils who are educated away from the school. Leaders and ECMAT now regularly check that safeguarding procedures are being used correctly. For example, senior leaders check the single central record each month and ECMAT does so each term. Behaviour around the school site between lessons and at social times has improved considerably and pupils now feel safe in school.

ECMAT quickly commissioned the external reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium recommended in the inspection report. Leaders have begun to implement the recommendations of the pupil-premium review but it is too early to see impact in improving teaching, outcomes and attendance for these pupils. The review of governance recommends replacing the local governing board with an interim executive board. ECMAT intend to implement this change from September.

Leaders have rightly focused on improving behaviour and ensuring that classrooms are places where learning can take place. They have been successful in this. They have carried out some limited work to improve teaching, including introducing a set of basic expectations of lesson planning. Leaders have not yet fully evaluated the effectiveness of teaching across the school. Nor have they put in place effective training to address weaknesses in teaching.

The school has effective systems for handling and accessing data about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance. This information is being used increasingly well to spot issues and trends. Leaders do not yet use it consistently well to take action to address the issues they have identified. Assessment information in key stages 3 and 4 is unreliable because teachers are not able to make accurate assessments of pupils' attainment. This undermines leaders' ability to target extra help as well as they ought. Teachers have recently received training to improve the reliability of assessments in English, mathematics, science, history and geography. It is too soon to judge its success.

Middle leaders form a committed group who are keen to see the school improve. Pastoral middle leaders show a high degree of consistency in the way in which they work and they have contributed well to recent improvements in behaviour. Subject leaders show greater variability in practice and in their understanding of their role.

Despite difficult recent months, staff morale has been maintained and is now improving. Staff are increasingly optimistic about the future, especially since the arrival of the headteacher.

The school's governance was criticised in January's inspection report. Governance has not improved in the intervening months. The school's local governing board is a

dedicated group who care deeply about the school. However, they lack sufficient educational expertise to hold leaders to account adequately for the school's performance. Over time, they have been overly reliant on information from school leaders and have not made use of external expertise to test what they have been told. Since the school became an academy in 2015, ECMAT has failed to address this weakness in local governance. ECMAT has delegated oversight of the school's performance to a local governing board who are unable to do the job.

Governors and school leaders do not understand the role of ECMAT's board of trustees. Neither do they understand the relationship between the local governing board and the ECMAT board. They are unclear about ECMAT's structure. Governors are unclear and about where responsibility for the school's performance lies. At the time of inspection, they were unaware of ECMAT's scheme of delegation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching has improved a little since January's inspection. Better behaviour in lessons is allowing teachers to concentrate more on teaching and less on managing behaviour. Leaders have introduced a 'lesson framework' which sets out minimum expectations of planning. This has resulted in a more consistent teaching approach across the school. Relationships are generally warm and respectful in classrooms. Pupils are typically attentive and respectful. They are keen to do well and happy to volunteer answers to questions.

However, the quality of teaching varies considerably. Much weak teaching remains. There is little evidence of teachers matching work to pupils' ability or needs. Consequently, the most able pupils often find work too easy while less-able pupils sometimes struggle to begin tasks. Weak planning is also evident in time being wasted in lessons. Pupils too often sit listening to unnecessary explanations or waiting to be given equipment or resources.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

All staff and almost all pupils who spoke with inspectors agreed that behaviour has improved since January's inspection. Leaders have reviewed and relaunched the school's behaviour policy. Teachers use it more consistently and pupils understand the consequences of poor behaviour. Leaders now support teachers well in managing behaviour. If a pupil persists in disrupting learning, despite their teacher's warnings, leaders remove the pupil and allow the lesson to proceed productively.

Staff and pupils are unanimous that behaviour between lessons, at break and lunchtime has improved considerably. They told inspectors that corridors are much calmer with far less boisterous or dangerous behaviour. Many pupils told inspectors that the introduction of closed-circuit television around the school has contributed to this improvement and to them feeling safer around school. Senior leaders have dealt decisively with a recent spate of malicious fire alarm activations.

Following an ECMAT review of 'the Hub', the school's on-site unit for short-term and long-term internal exclusions, leaders decided to close this facility. This has led to a sharp reduction in the number of pupils missing their lessons while placed in the Hub.

Inspectors observed little disruption of lessons and nothing worse than some off-task chattiness. In several lessons, pupils behaved well despite some weak teaching. The school is now generally calm and orderly throughout the school day. Pupils are typically polite, courteous and sensibly behaved.

Leaders' higher expectations of pupils' behaviour has seen an increase in fixed-term and permanent exclusions. However, this has contributed to the improving behaviour across the school. Leaders envisage the use of exclusion reducing in the coming months.

Pupils feel safe in school. All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they now feel safe in school. They said that bullying is rare. All said that there is an adult in school who they could talk to if they were to experience bullying or any other problem.

The school recently held a 'safeguarding month' where lessons and visiting groups and speakers focused on safety issues such as bullying, gang violence, e-safety and grooming. Pupils valued this teaching and it has helped them to develop a better understanding of how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential dangers.

Attendance has fallen this year. Overall attendance, which was in line with the national average for secondary schools in 2016, is now well below that figure. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which was low in 2016, has declined even further. Leaders are acutely aware of this decline and have put in place a number of actions designed to improve attendance. There is no evidence of an impact as yet.

Outcomes for pupils

Key stage 4 outcomes in 2016 were weak, with the school falling below the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress. Pupils made slow progress in several subjects including mathematics and geography. Progress was stronger in English. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made particularly slow progress from their starting points. The school's assessment information suggests that the weaknesses seen in 2016 remain and that standards are unlikely to be higher in 2017.

Pupils' progress remains slow in key stage 3, but the school's assessment information suggests that this is beginning to improve. However, leaders

acknowledge that new assessment systems in key stage 3 and teachers' track record of inaccurate assessment mean that this information is currently of questionable value.

Standards in the sixth form are higher than in the main school. In 2016, students made progress from their starting points that was similar to other students nationally. Teachers' assessments in the sixth form are broadly accurate. Based on these assessments, leaders anticipate similar outcomes in 2017 with academic subjects improving a little.

External support

All of the school's external support has either been provided by, or brokered by, ECMAT. It has contributed well to the school's improvement since the inspection. Following January's inspection, ECMAT's director of secondary academies provided extensive and effective support in:

- mentoring senior leaders and the acting headteacher
- drawing up the school's interim improvement plan
- sourcing support from two local teaching schools, Tudor Grange Academy Solihull and Wood Green Academy
- reviewing the school's Hub provision.

ECMAT also provide a school improvement partner (SIP) who has provided effective support and challenge for some time. The SIP is currently mentoring the headteacher and supporting leaders in developing reliable assessment information.

The director of secondary academies left ECMAT at Easter. Partly in response to this, ECMAT secured the new headteacher's arrival half a term earlier than was originally planned. Although the level of support from ECMAT has reduced since the director of secondary academies' departure, this has not set the school back.

ECMAT has provided effective financial and personnel advice and support to school leaders as they manage the restructuring of the school's staff.

ECMAT's support for governance has been and remains weak.