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15 January 2018

Mr Doug Elliott
Principal
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Normanby Road
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Dear Mr Elliott

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hillsview Academy

Following my visit with Paul Welford, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 12–13 December 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 May 2017.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are not 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Redcar and Cleveland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Leaders and governors should take action to rapidly improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing and strengthening leadership at all levels so that all leaders are effectively evaluating the success of their actions to improve outcomes for pupils
 - monitoring and evaluating the use of additional funds for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need to catch up so that spending is precisely targeted and improves outcomes for these pupils.
- Leaders and governors should improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by:
 - ensuring that teachers have the highest expectations of what all pupils can achieve 
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons carefully to meet the needs of all pupils, so that all pupils make good progress from their starting points
 - improving and embedding the new behaviour system so that it is applied consistently by all teachers and disruption to learning rapidly reduces
 - implementing an effective whole-school literacy strategy so that pupils improve their spelling, punctuation, reading and extended writing.
- Leaders and governors should urgently improve attendance, behaviour and pupil welfare by:
 - eradicating internal truancy and preventing pupils from smoking on site
 - reducing the number of behaviour incidents and fixed-term exclusions
 - reducing persistent absence and improving attendance for all groups of pupils, particularly for those who are disadvantaged, and for students in the sixth form
 - improving the quality of the provision for personal, social, health and economic education so that all pupils in the school and students in the sixth form receive education to prepare them for their futures.
- Leaders and governors should take urgent action to ensure that safeguarding is effective by:
 - ensuring that records of bullying, attendance issues and referrals are detailed and reference action taken and associated impact
 - ensuring that pupils move safely around the building without running,

pushing or shoving.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 December 2017 to 13 December 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, including the trust's statement of action, which is combined with the school's improvement plan. Inspectors met with the principal, executive principal and members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors met with middle leaders, a group of staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors also talked informally with pupils during breaks and lunchtimes. Both inspectors visited lessons and looked at pupils' work in their books. A telephone conversation was held with five members of the new governing board, including a representative from the Academies Enterprise Trust.

Context

Since the school was last inspected, there have been a number of changes to staffing. An associate assistant principal was appointed in September 2017. A new assistant principal will take up post in January 2018. Seventeen staff have left the school and four new members of staff have joined the school. An additional attendance officer has been appointed. The governing body has been replaced with a new governing board. The new chair of governors is also the executive principal. The principal has taken on the role of designated safeguarding lead since the previous inspection in May 2017.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The principal, governors and the senior leadership team are well aware of what needs to improve at Hillview Academy. Their school improvement plan focuses on the main priorities for improvement. Measurable small steps have been included so that leaders can evaluate actions for impact. However, since the previous inspection the pace of change has not been rapid enough. Improvements have been too slow. Consequently, many of the areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection remain main priorities for the school.

Middle leaders are more accountable for the quality of provision within their departments. However, actions to improve outcomes for pupils, and improve the quality of teaching and learning, have not been swift enough. Expectations of what pupils can do and achieve are still not high enough. As a result, pupils make poor progress from their different starting points. The quality of middle leadership remains variable. Middle leaders do not evaluate the quality of teaching and learning well enough to pinpoint precisely where improvement is needed. Professional development has not had enough impact on improving the quality of teaching within departments.

Safeguarding records are now fit for purpose. They reference actions, including any

follow up required. Records now show the impact of work with other agencies. Support for pupils and their families is undertaken in a more timely manner. Racist incidents have reduced since the previous inspection and are now reported to the local authority. A new link governor for safeguarding, together with a change in personnel in the safeguarding team, means there are improved systems and procedures for keeping pupils safe.

Since the previous inspection, governors have commissioned a pupil premium review. This has led to the creation of a more effective plan. This plan outlines how funding to support disadvantaged pupils will be used this academic year. However, as the plan is new, it is too early for leaders to judge its impact. The governing body is clear about how the extra funding to support Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up is used. However, they are less knowledgeable about how additional funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, they are not holding leaders to account for the use of this funding.

The Academies Enterprise Trust have recently carried out a special educational needs (SEN) review. As a result of the recommendations from this review, a fully costed provision map, to track and cost interventions, is now in place. SEN pupils are beginning to make better progress in reading. The SEN coordinator is providing more effective leadership. She understands the actions needed to improve provision further for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

A new governing board was formed after the previous inspection. The executive principal also fulfils the role of chair of governors. The trust recognise that this dual role could possibly blur the lines of accountability and is keeping this under review. The establishment of a new governing board has led to some improvement in governors' skills and expertise. Despite this, governors have an overly optimistic view of the impact of actions taken since the last inspection. Currently, an external review of governance is underway.

An area for improvement identified in the previous inspection was for leaders to ensure that pupils move around the building safely without running, pushing or shoving. Leaders have introduced a 'meet and greet' policy, where staff are present on the corridors in-between lesson changeover. However, inspectors found there is still too much pushing, shoving and inappropriate language on corridors. Despite an increased staff presence at breaks and lunchtimes, some incidents of unsafe behaviour were witnessed at lunchtime during the first day of the inspection. Staff did not deal with this effectively. Leaders and staff acknowledge pupils' use of inappropriate language. However, this has not been tackled with enough urgency. Inspectors also found examples of distasteful language written on desks, which had been there for some time. Standards and expectations are still not high enough.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

There is still too much variability in the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do and achieve. Activities are often not challenging enough. Teachers do not plan learning effectively to meet the needs of all pupils, especially the most able. As a result, pupils are not making good progress for their different starting points. Presentation remains variable. From scrutiny of pupils' books, although inspectors found good presentation, they also found some very poor presentation, including instances of graffiti. Teachers are picking up poor presentation. However, too many pupils do not respond. Inspectors found in pupils' books many instances where work was not completed. This is particularly evident when pupils are taken out of lessons for poor behaviour. Leaders acknowledge that the current system for removing pupils from lessons is leading to further gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Leaders have plans to review the systems for removing pupils from lessons early next term.

Literacy still remains a significant priority for the school. Teachers identify pupils' spelling errors. However, in too many cases pupils are not correcting them. Extended writing across the curriculum is still underdeveloped. The school's policy to provide more opportunities for pupils to edit and improve their work is applied inconsistently. A new reading strategy is developing. This is leading to greater proportions of pupils using the school library. Reading ages, for pupils in Years 7 and 10, are now shared with all staff. This is helping to raise awareness of pupils' barriers to learning in reading.

Leaders are beginning to tackle the legacy of poor teaching. They have introduced more regular checks to evaluate and monitor the quality of teaching and learning. However, leaders recognise that poor attitudes to learning are hampering further progress. Inspectors witnessed teachers not tackling substandard work from pupils because of the time they spend dealing with behaviour issues. Leaders have recently introduced a new scheme, 'ready, respect, safe', to address this. Their aim is to improve pupils' attitudes towards learning, raise aspirations and increase the number of positive comments from teachers. It is too early to see the impact of this new scheme in lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils truanting and smoking on site has reduced. Nevertheless, leaders acknowledge that rates of internal truancy remain too high. There is, therefore, still work to do to eradicate smoking and internal truancy.

Absence rates remain high. Rates of persistent absence are more than double the national average. They show little sign of declining over time. However, attendance of SEN pupils has improved. During visits to lessons, inspectors observed a number of pupils absent from lessons. The numbers of pupils late to morning registration are high. On the second day of the inspection, 70 pupils were late. Staff also report

that pupils can be slow getting to lessons. Leaders have introduced systems to tackle lateness to school. However, so far this has had little impact.

Low-level disruption remains an issue. Inspectors witnessed inconsistent use of the school's behaviour policy. There are still too many pupils removed from lessons due to poor behaviour. Pupils informed inspectors that there is disruption in many of their lessons. They report that this has not improved significantly since the previous inspection. Some pupils told inspectors that this is affecting their learning and progress.

Fixed-term exclusions have increased. However, repeat exclusions have reduced. Leaders acknowledge there is work to do to rapidly reduce the number of exclusions, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

Although recorded incidents of bullying have reduced since the previous inspection, too many pupils told inspectors that bullying remains an issue. Some pupils informed inspectors that staff are managing bullying more effectively now. However, many pupils told inspectors that bullying still persists after staff intervention.

Since the previous inspection, the personal, social, health and economic education programme has been reviewed. As a result, a more comprehensive programme is now in place. Although delivery of the programme during tutor time is variable, some better practice was observed in Year 10, where pupils worked well with their peers when discussing relationships.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils made weak progress across their GCSE subjects in 2017. Provisional results indicate that outcomes remain in the bottom 10% nationally. Disadvantaged and most-able pupils made over a grade less progress than pupils nationally. Outcomes for sixth-form pupils remain stronger. Provisional results indicate that sixth-form attainment improved in 2017. In comparison to previous years, a higher proportion of students achieved the top grades of A* and B in their A levels. Pupils continue to make good progress on vocational courses.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed systems to check pupils' progress. This enables leaders to review the progress of different groups of pupils. Subject tracking of pupils' progress has also improved. This is leading to the identification of pupils who need extra support to meet their target grades. However, the school's current progress information shows that too many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are not making rapid enough progress from their starting points. Leaders and governors understand that there remains a lot of work to do to secure better outcomes for pupils.

External support

The executive principal, appointed by the trust, provides the school with additional leadership capacity. The trust provides consultant support for English, mathematics and science. This support has not brought about rapid improvement since the previous inspection. However, the SEN review, commissioned by the trust, has led to the development of more effective systems to monitor the progress of pupils who have SEN. As a result, these pupils are beginning to make better progress.