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Mr Clive Jones  
Headteacher  
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West Midlands  
WV11 3ES

Dear Mr Jones

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Wednesfield High Specialist Engineering Academy**

Following my visit with Karen Lockett, Ofsted Inspector, and Peter Bassett, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 10–11 July 2018, 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.

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

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer (CEO) 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 (SEN) 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 SEN 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 third monitoring inspection on 10 July 2018 to 11 July 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record. They met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, other staff and three groups of pupils. The lead inspector met with four members of the interim advisory board (IAB) and with the CEO of ECMAT, the school's sponsor.

Inspectors observed learning and behaviour during visits to lessons. Some of these visits were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors observed pupils at morning breaktime and lunchtime and as they moved around the school. They spoke with many pupils about their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. Several documents were scrutinised, including the school's improvement plan, self-evaluation, minutes of IAB meetings, and the school's records about current pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance.

Inspectors considered parents' and carers' views through a survey that the school had recently conducted. They also considered a letter from a parent.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, an assistant headteacher has joined the school. The head of mathematics and special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) have both left the school. New appointments to these posts joined the school at the start of the summer term. There has been some revision of responsibilities within the senior leadership team. Several teachers will leave at the end of the year, and the school is set to be fully staffed in September 2018.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The trajectory of improvement reported in the two previous monitoring inspections has been maintained. Further improvements are apparent in many areas of the school's work including teaching, behaviour, attendance and pupils' progress. The headteacher is well supported by an increasingly effective senior leadership team. Together, they understand the school's strengths and those areas that are not yet good enough. They are committed to seeing the school continue to improve and they have clear, well-focused plans in place to address all remaining weaknesses.

Leaders' and teachers' use of assessment information continues to improve. Leaders have made good use of support from several local schools to improve the reliability of teachers' assessments in several subjects at key stage 4. This information is now used well by senior and middle leaders to identify pupils who are not doing as well as they should be. They then provide extra support that helps these pupils to catch up. Consequently, pupils in key stage 4 are making better progress, and leaders anticipate improved GCSE results this summer.

At key stage 3, leaders have introduced a new system for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers understand the new system and are using it with increasing confidence. However, it has not been in operation for very long, and teachers' assessments vary considerably between subjects. This makes the information unreliable, and leaders cannot confidently use it to identify and address the underachievement of pupils or groups of pupils in Years 7 and 8.

In many aspects of the school's work, leaders are using data much more productively than they have in the past. They now scrutinise information about teaching, pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour to identify issues that need to be improved. Having identified issues, leaders plan well-targeted strategies to address them. They also now evaluate the success of those strategies, discarding or amending those that are unsuccessful. This thoughtful, strategic approach has underpinned improvements in many areas, including leaders' use of the pupil premium. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils' attendance is improving and their progress is accelerating.

Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved considerably since the previous monitoring inspection. The school now has an accurate register of pupils who have SEN, and leaders have provided teachers with detailed information about these pupils. Some teachers are making good use of this information to plan activities that support these pupils well. However, this is not always the case and some teachers lack the skill to make good use of this information.

Teaching is well led. Leaders have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses across the school. They provide effective training for groups of staff and individuals, which is steadily helping to improve the quality of teaching that pupils receive. Middle leaders are growing in expertise and are increasingly involved in checking on the quality of teaching in their subjects. Their checks currently tend to focus more on what teachers are doing and less on how pupils are learning. Leaders are aware that this is an area that needs to develop in time.

The school has a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders have made changes to the length of lessons and the time allocated to different subjects in response to weaknesses they have identified. There is a strong and appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy in Years 7 and 8. Pupils choose from a wide range of subjects in key stage 4, and this helps to interest and engage them in their learning. In the sixth form, students have a wide choice of A levels and applied general and technical level qualifications. Through the Wolverhampton consortium, students are able to choose to study some subjects at other schools, if Wednesfield does not offer them.

The IAB, which had only met once at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, is now well established and has met several times. Members of the IAB now know the school well. Several are linked to aspects of the school's work, including SEN, pupil premium use, safeguarding and subject areas. They visit the

school regularly to gain first-hand information. They question and challenge senior leaders in meetings and they seek external perspectives about aspects of the school's work, when they feel they need it. Consequently, they are becoming increasingly effective in providing support and challenge to leaders.

ECMAT is providing effective support and challenge to the school in several key areas. Through their CEO and executive headteacher, trustees are holding leaders to account for the school's improvement.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Teaching continues to improve, although its quality still varies between subjects. There is now an increasing proportion of effective teaching in the school, especially in English, humanities, social sciences and business studies. Teaching is weaker in mathematics and science, but, even here, there is some strong teaching and evidence of improvement over time.

Effective teaching across the school is characterised by careful planning, which ensures that activities are well matched to pupils' abilities and individual needs. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves and of the amount and quality of work they should do in a lesson. Teachers use questioning skilfully to check that pupils understand what they are studying. They expect detailed answers from pupils and expect them to think about and refine their responses to questions.

Where teaching is weaker, although teachers plan lessons, their planning does not have the desired effect and work is not well pitched for pupils' abilities and/or needs. Consequently, pupils find work too easy or too hard and do not learn well as a result. Teachers do not effectively check on pupils' understanding and so are sometimes unaware that pupils are struggling. Sometimes, teachers' expectations are not high enough. They are too accepting of insufficient or incomplete work or of low-level disruption. They do not make good use of time in lessons, and time is wasted as a result. Inspectors observed some lessons where considerable time passed before pupils did anything productive.

Mathematics teaching is improving. New leadership has galvanised the department, which is now a cohesive team, open to new ideas and committed to improvement. Leaders are aware that the current work scheme does not allow pupils sufficient time to develop a good understanding of topics before they move on to study a different area. Because of this, teaching focuses too much on learned methods at the expense of reasoning and problem-solving. Consequently, pupils tend to have only a superficial understanding of topics which they have studied.

The teaching of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is improving as teachers increasingly use information about these pupils when planning activities. However, the quality of provision in lessons is currently inconsistent.

Teachers now make the progress of disadvantaged pupils a priority. They know who these pupils are and regularly assess their progress. This is more effective in key stage 4 than in key stage 3, because of the newness of the assessment procedures in Years 7 and 8. They put into place extra help for any pupils who are falling behind.

Teaching in the sixth form is more effective than in the main school. Weaknesses apparent in key stages 3 and 4 are not apparent in sixth-form lessons. Students benefit from subject-specialist teaching, often in small classes. They are very well supported by their teachers, as a result.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Behaviour continues to improve. Incidents of poor behaviour that result in pupils being removed from lessons or excluded for a fixed term have become less frequent as the year has proceeded. Most pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to do well. However, some low-level disruption of learning persists. Typically, this takes the form of chatting, doing little work or playing with mobile phones. These behaviours are far more prevalent when teaching is weaker, especially in the younger year groups. Sometimes, teachers are too accepting of low-level disruption and do not challenge it, using the school's behaviour policy.

At breaktime, lunchtime and between lessons, the school is generally calm and orderly. Pupils move between lessons sensibly. They are considerate, polite and friendly. They are accepting of other pupils, including those who are different from them in some way. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare. They said that they trust adults to deal with any that does happen. All pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe in school. They were also clear about how the school has improved over that last 12 months, especially behaviour and teaching. They were equally clear that they would like to see further improvements in teaching and behaviour.

Because of leaders' carefully planned and evaluated actions, attendance has improved considerably this year. It is now close to the national average for secondary schools. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved by twice that of other pupils in school. Consequently, although their attendance is lower than that of other pupils, the gap is closing.

Sixth-form students are well motivated and very keen to succeed. They are confident, enthusiastic and able to work independently and in small groups with equal success.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Validated GCSE results for 2017, which were released after the previous monitoring inspection, confirmed that pupils had made poor progress in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. The school fell below the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation of pupils' progress by the end of Year 11. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities fared even more poorly than other pupils in school.

Effective leadership, better teaching and improving behaviour mean that pupils are now making better progress in all years. Teachers' assessments, which have been checked for accuracy by other schools, indicate that GCSE outcomes will be stronger this year. However, they are still likely to represent progress which is poorer than it ought to be.

Disadvantaged pupils continue to achieve less well than other pupils in school and nationally. However, better teaching and effective extra support mean that this gap is closing in all years. It has closed considerably in some, for example in Year 11.

Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities continue to make poor progress. However, some improvement is evident, especially in younger year groups. Teachers' assessments indicate that outcomes for the current Year 11 will be even poorer than in 2017, because these pupils have had very brief exposure to improved provision and support. Progress is a little stronger in other year groups, but it is too soon to see significant impact from the changes made over the past few months.

Validated post-16 results for 2017 showed students making weak progress in some A-level subjects, but reasonable progress in others. Students made better progress on applied general courses and good progress in technical qualifications. Leaders anticipate slightly better outcomes this year, especially in A-level courses.

## **External support**

Leaders and governors, well supported by ECMAT, have sourced effective external support from several schools, from the University of Wolverhampton and from the local authority. Leaders are not over reliant on any external support; instead, they make good use of it to promote further improvement. For example, a local school is supporting improvement in mathematics. Similarly, guidance from the local authority has helped leaders to strengthen SEN provision.