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8 November 2018

Mrs Lisa Walton  
Headteacher  
The Ripley Academy  
Peasehill  
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Derbyshire  
DE5 3JQ

Dear Mrs Walton

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Ripley Academy**

Following my visit with Chris Stevens, Her Majesty's Inspector, to the academy on 23 and 24 October 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 June 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.

I am of the opinion that 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 of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Mosley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in June 2017.**

- Improve the quality of teaching across all year groups by ensuring that all teachers:
  - have high enough expectations for what pupils can achieve across all subjects and year groups
  - plan activities that meet the needs of all groups of pupils effectively, especially the most able and those who are disadvantaged
  - use the school's systems for managing behaviour consistently well and that lessons consistently engage pupils in their learning
  - check carefully that pupils have learned and understood things before moving them on to the next topic.
- Raise achievement across the school, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
  - ensuring that assessment information is accurate
  - ensuring that target setting and monitoring of pupils' progress is robust and aspirational, including in the sixth form
  - sharing current best practice within the school and across the trust effectively.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - evaluations made by leaders at all levels are accurate
  - subject leaders and those with other roles of responsibility have sufficient training and skills to carry out their roles effectively
  - external moderation of work across the trust is systematic and robust
  - the use of extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils is rigorously evaluated
  - the governing body and academy trust are more effective at holding leaders to account by checking more carefully that agreed actions have had sufficient impact.

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

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 23 October 2018 and 24 October 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders and groups of staff. Inspectors also met the chief executive officer and the director of secondary education of the East Midlands Education Trust (EMET). Inspectors met with groups of pupils formally and also spoke with pupils during lessons and around school.

Inspectors visited parts of 27 lessons with different senior and middle leaders and discussed the strengths and weaknesses observed. An inspector looked at a large sample of pupils' work with a senior leader. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work in their lessons and spoke to them to evaluate the quality of their learning. Inspectors observed two assemblies and visited two morning tutor sessions.

A number of documents were scrutinised, including records in relation to pupils' behaviour and attendance, as well as to their attainment and progress. Inspectors read the minutes of meetings of the governing body and the board of trustees and the headteacher's report to governors. They also looked at the school improvement plans and the plans for the use of the pupil premium. Arrangements for safeguarding were scrutinised, including the checks made on staff as part of the school's recruitment process. Inspectors looked at the information published on the school's website, including a range of policies.

Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers which were presented through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the minutes of the parent forum meetings held by school leaders.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been a few changes to staffing. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has left the school. Five new teachers joined the school in September, including the second in department in science.

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

The headteacher continues to inspire staff and pupils to achieve their best. She has extremely high aspirations for pupils' success. She has instilled a sense of belief in pupils and is well supported by all staff, who promote the 'can-do' culture of the school. The headteacher's clear vision is understood by all.

The headteacher is very well supported by the head of school and the deputy headteacher, who are effective in their roles. Leaders collaborate very well, and they consider the impact of their actions on other aspects of school improvement. There is a holistic approach to school improvement which centres on the school's

'pillars', five key concepts which underpin all aspects of the school's work. Leaders are highly reflective. They continually evaluate the impact of their work and amend their plans accordingly. They take swift, well-considered action when they identify weaknesses. This means that school improvement is ongoing and sustainable.

Leaders have, rightly, focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning in all areas of the school, and the improvements evident at the last monitoring inspection have been built on. Leaders have also ensured that the end of key stage assessment is accurate, for example through extensive moderation of pupils' work within the school and across the trust. However, leaders acknowledge that ongoing assessment practices are less effective. Leaders are in the process of reviewing the school's assessment and feedback policy, with particular regards to the means by which teachers provide feedback to pupils. The impact of this work will be explored at the next monitoring visit.

Leaders have ensured that teachers' professional development is promoted. Staff participate in a range of training activities, some of which are delivered by external specialists. Leaders encourage staff to share best practice through informal means, such as morning staff briefings and the after-school teachers' forum. These are supplemented by structured training sessions and workshops which are designed around the school's improvement priorities. Staff appreciate the professional development opportunities they receive and are keen to continue to improve their practice.

Support for subject leaders to develop their effectiveness is ongoing. The head of school provides training to middle leaders to lead improvements in their departments. Heads of subjects carry out monitoring activities, such as lesson observations, focusing on teachers' application of the teaching, learning and assessment policy. They accurately identify areas in need of improvement and provide effective challenge and support to staff to improve their practice. This has been particularly effective in developing teachers' use of questioning and discussion. Senior leaders recognise that further work needs to be done to ensure that all monitoring activities, such as scrutinising pupils' books, are equally effective in promoting pupils' progress. They are beginning to take action to improve this area of the school's work through their review of the assessment and feedback policy.

Leaders' work to ensure the effective use of the pupil premium funding has continued. At the time of the last monitoring visit, leaders had begun to act on the recommendations of the external review of the use of this funding. Leaders have now evaluated the impact of the funding and are using this information to inform their planning. The work to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of all pupils across the school has also supported the progress of disadvantaged pupils. However, the 'classroom entitlement', which remains a key strategy for supporting this group of pupils, is not consistently implemented. Leaders recognise the need to continue to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and have maintained the focus to do so. For example, during the monitoring

inspection the external reviewer was conducting a follow-up review to evaluate leaders' response to the initial review.

Leaders have identified the need to improve the school's provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). In September 2018, the headteacher allocated responsibility for the leadership of this aspect of the school's work to one of the heads of house. As coordinator, she has ensured that there is now a clear vision for the promotion of this aspect for all pupils. Work has begun to integrate CEIAG into the curriculum. For example, during the monitoring inspection Year 8 pupils were participating in a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) activity, working with representatives of Rolls-Royce. Plans are in place to provide more opportunities for pupils to participate in work-related learning and work experience. The development of this provision is in its early stages, and it is too soon to evaluate the impact on how well pupils are prepared for the next stages in their education, employment or training. This will be explored at the next monitoring visit.

New arrangements for the leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are in place. The SEN leadership consists of the trust's SENCo, who is responsible for ensuring that the code of practice is implemented; the school's head of SEN, who works part time at the school and has responsibility for the strategic leadership of the provision; and an assistant head of SEN, who works full time at the school, leading the day-to-day work to support pupils. Leaders have taken action to address the weaknesses identified at the full inspection in June 2017. They have reviewed the SEN register to ensure that pupils' needs are accurately identified. They are currently in the process of evaluating the impact of the provision to ensure that it is meeting pupils' needs. Leaders have also amended the approach to the use of teaching assistants. They have redeployed teaching assistants, linking each to a department, with a view to developing their expertise in one subject area. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this strategy on teaching assistants' effectiveness. Leaders recognise that much remains to be done to improve outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The SENCo has developed plans to bring about the necessary improvements.

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

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve, particularly in regard to teachers' planning. At the time of the last monitoring inspection, leaders had introduced a new teaching and learning policy which set out clear expectations of teachers and lesson structures. Teachers were using the policy's concept of 'pitch, pace and activity' to plan activities to challenge pupils of all abilities. Leaders have further developed the school's teaching framework. Teachers now plan lessons following a clear structure around the concepts of 'connect, activate, demonstrate and consolidate'. Teachers said that this approach has supported their practice. Pupils recognise the structure and told inspectors it helps their learning. Pupils particularly appreciate the opportunity that the framework provides to recap on

their learning, helping it to 'stick'.

There is some strong teaching practice in the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which many use to inspire and interest pupils in their learning. The quality of teachers' questioning has also improved. Inspectors observed effective discussion and questioning to probe and develop pupils' understanding, particularly in science, Spanish and physical education.

Although there are clear improvements in the quality of teaching, inconsistencies remain within and between departments. Not all teachers ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in their work. For example, some do not check that pupils have selected activities which are appropriate to their ability. In addition, some teachers do not encourage all pupils to participate in all activities, particularly in discussions, so it is easy for pupils to 'opt out'. Sometimes, teachers do not ensure that pupils are secure in their learning before they are moved on to the next activity. Teachers do not consistently provide feedback to help pupils to develop their learning. Pupils do not always know how they can improve their work.

Ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains a key priority for the school's continued improvement.

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

Pupils have responded positively to high expectations regarding their conduct, attitude and effort. Leaders support pupils to take responsibility for themselves, to develop their independence and to behave as responsible individuals. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are positive. The school is extremely welcoming and inclusive. Pupils are respectful and supportive of one another. The result is a calm, caring, harmonious community.

Instances of low-level disruption are rare. On occasions, when teaching does not meet pupils' needs, some pupils become distracted and lose focus. However, they do not behave in a way that disrupts the learning of others. The overwhelming majority of pupils are keen to succeed. Many are aspirational and work hard in lessons. However, pupils are not effectively supported to take pride in their written work. Leaders plan to tackle this issue through their work to review the school's policy to monitor pupils' work and provide them with feedback.

The small number of pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are well supported. Leaders are creative in finding solutions to support pupils and to avoid exclusions. Exclusion rates continue to fall, but disadvantaged pupils are disproportionately represented.

Leaders' work to improve attendance has continued, with positive results. Whole-school attendance is now similar to national averages. The proportion of pupils,

including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, who are persistently absent from school has reduced and was below the national average in 2018. However, the overall attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, although improving, remains below national averages.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Historically, weak teaching and low expectations have led to pupils making poor progress in recent years. Considerable improvements to all aspects of the school's work are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

In 2018, pupils' progress showed a marked improvement, including in English and mathematics. Girls made stronger progress than boys across a range of subjects, and their overall progress was similar to that achieved by all girls nationally. Disadvantaged pupils, and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, also made stronger progress than in the past. Nevertheless, progress for many groups of pupils remained below the national average.

Pupils' attainment also improved in many subjects, particularly in mathematics, science, Spanish, music, and health and social care. The proportion of pupils achieving a standard pass and a strong pass in GCSE English and mathematics increased, although it is likely to be below that achieved by all pupils nationally.

As a result of much-improved teaching, current pupils are making stronger progress than in the past. Leaders' tracking information indicates that pupils' progress in 2019 will improve further. Leaders also expect the proportion of pupils achieving standard and strong passes in English and mathematics to increase again in 2019.

### **External support**

The trust has provided extensive, effective support to all aspects of school improvement, for example in the leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and through supporting subject leaders. Plans are in place to provide support to the subject leaders of geography and history following the trust's recent appointment of a director of humanities. In addition to the support provided by the trust, leaders are proactive in seeking external support. For example, a national leader of education is currently supporting the school's work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, conducting reviews and undertaking follow-up work.