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13 February 2019

Joe Mulligan
Principal
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Dear Mr Mulligan

Special measures monitoring inspection of South Wiltshire UTC

Following my visit with Dorian Lewis and Martin Bennett, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 29–30 January 2019, 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 February 2018.

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 action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wiltshire. This letter will be

published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2018.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders have the capacity necessary to carry out their roles successfully
 - developing middle leaders so that they are able to improve the quality of teaching and hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make
 - recruiting staff with appropriate skills and expertise, particularly in engineering, to raise achievement
 - ensuring that the curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced to meet the needs of pupils in all year groups, particularly in respect of physical education (PE) provision
 - ensuring that the challenge and support provided by governors is fully evaluated for effectiveness and has demonstrable impact
 - accessing appropriate external support that assists leaders in improving the quality of leadership and teaching, and raising achievement
 - improving communication between different members of the school community, including parents, pupils and staff
 - engaging parents more effectively in the work of the school
 - ensuring that day-to-day managerial processes are more efficient and better organised
 - improving leadership of the sixth form to ensure that the requirements of 16–19 study programmes are met.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement for pupils of different abilities across both key stages, including those who are disadvantaged, by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - set challenging and interesting work that meets pupils' different needs and engages them in their learning
 - use progress information more effectively to help pupils achieve their targets
 - consistently apply the school's feedback policy to help pupils improve their work.
- Improve pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour by ensuring that:
 - pupils develop more positive attitudes to learning beyond compliant, passive behaviour

- attendance improves for different groups of pupils
- pupils are provided with suitable careers advice that enables them to make informed decisions about their next steps after leaving school.

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 the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 29 January 2019 to 30 January 2019

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors met with the principal, deputy chief executive officer and director of education of the Activate Learning Education Trust (ALET), and senior leaders. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and the chair of the interim executive committee (IEC). Inspectors observed pupils' and students' learning in a range of subjects in key stages 4 and 5. Inspectors met with groups of pupils and students formally and spoke with many pupils and students informally around the school. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the principal's latest report to governors, the school's plans for improvement and records relating to safeguarding.

Context

Soon after the school was placed in special measures in February 2018, the governing body commissioned reviews of governance and the school's use of pupil premium funding. These reviews took place in May and June 2018. During this period, ALET was appointed as the preferred sponsor of the school. This is a multi-academy trust which comprises four university technical colleges, one studio school and two secondary schools.

Nine teachers left the school during the academic year ending in July 2018. A senior leader, the student services manager and the business manager also left. The school currently has 12 teachers. The number of teaching staff was reduced due to a fall in pupil numbers. All teaching posts are currently filled.

The school entered into a support agreement with ALET in September 2018. The stated intention of this agreement is to work towards the school joining the trust by September 2019.

A new chair of the governing body was appointed in September 2018 and the IEC was established. This body has taken on some of the responsibilities of the governing body, especially the oversight of the strategy for improving the performance of the school.

The school has existing links with the University of Southampton and has developed further links with Cranfield University over the past year.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The principal has brought the school through a period of considerable turmoil in staffing. A high level of staff absence and poor teaching led to disruption of pupils' learning last year. However, with support from ALET, he has stabilised the school.

Pupils now have greater confidence in their teachers. They trust them to have the expertise necessary to teach the school's flagship courses in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

The reduction in pupil numbers this year has led to a reduction in the number of staff. This has led to the remaining senior leaders' roles being stretched to cover many areas of the school's work. For example, oversight of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The trust's support is adding the capacity necessary for senior leaders to carry out these roles.

Senior leaders are holding subject leaders to account more rigorously for the progress made by pupils and students in their areas of responsibility. Therefore, any ineffective practice is being identified and challenged earlier than in the past.

The director of education from the trust has been seconded to work at the school full time on a temporary basis. She has the expertise and experience necessary to develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. She has supported the introduction of an overarching strategy to improve teachers' knowledge and skills. The trust has started to provide coaching for teachers by linking them with other teachers across its network of schools. This work is helping inexperienced teachers and those working alone in particular specialisms to see good practice elsewhere and so help them to improve the quality of their work.

New leadership of the sixth form has led to better day-to-day organisation and communication. For example, sixth-form students were prepared effectively, and well in advance, for a workshop on computer engineering recently provided by the Royal Signals Regiment. As in other parts of the school, secure staffing and better organisation are giving sixth-form students more confidence that they can succeed. Even so, students do not yet capitalise fully on the school's employer contacts to organise work experience placements. As a result, the development of employability skills, which is a key requirement of post-16 study programmes, remains a weakness.

Leaders are planning to introduce a new strategy for linking sixth-form students with prospective employers. This is based on an established model from one of the other university technical colleges within the trust. However, this strategy is not yet established.

Senior leaders had some success in setting up a parents' forum group immediately after the previous inspection to gather parents' views about the future of the school. This year, leaders' efforts to engage parents and carers more effectively in the work of the school have not been as successful.

The new chair of the governing body has been involved with the school since its inception. He has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and so he is well placed to lead the governing body. The governing body has

a long-term strategic vision for the school. Even so, it is realistic about the challenges the school faces in the short term. Following the governance review, the governing body established the IEC in September 2018. The purpose of the IEC is to work with the prospective sponsor and take responsibility for ensuring rapid improvement of the quality of education at the school.

The chair of the IEC is experienced in school governance. She is passionate about the distinctive choice this school offers pupils in the local area. The IEC works closely with the principal and senior leaders. It provides them with effective challenge and support. This is ensuring that the school's plan for improvement is being acted upon with suitable urgency.

The background and expertise of ALET make it a suitable choice as a potential sponsor of this school. The support it is providing currently is enabling the development of senior and middle leaders' skills. Nevertheless, at this point, the school is heavily reliant on this support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Pupils' and students' learning was considerably disrupted last year due to staff absence and poor organisation. Many pupils and students report that this year their teachers are rarely absent and their courses are better organised. However, in several subjects, Year 11 pupils and Year 13 students are spending time catching up on work that was not covered last year.

The school has successfully recruited new staff with the experience and knowledge necessary to teach specialist subjects, such as engineering and design technology. However, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is still inconsistent. Teaching is not sufficiently well planned to enable all pupils to learn effectively. Pupils arrive at the school with a wide range of starting points and teaching still does not take this into account well enough. Some pupils find the work too difficult and some find the work too easy.

Teachers have not paid enough attention to long- and medium-term planning. They have concentrated too much on providing lessons on a day-to-day basis to overcome short-term challenges. However, this aspect of teachers' work is improving because senior leaders are developing links with specialist teachers in other schools in the trust. This is allowing teachers to share ideas and receive advice more effectively, and so their planning is improving.

Teaching does not consistently help pupils to see how their learning in lessons relates to the overall course. This causes some pupils to lack motivation because they are unable to see the purpose of their work.

Teachers have received training to further develop their use of data on the progress of pupils and students. This training has raised teachers' competence in using this

information. Even so, the use of attainment targets to help pupils and students make better progress is still inconsistent. Some pupils and students are unaware of what is expected of them or the grades they should aspire to.

With the support of ALET, senior leaders have introduced a long-term plan for the development of teaching. This plan, and the systematic training that goes with it, is providing good-quality professional development for teachers. This is resulting in teachers reflecting on their work and taking responsibility for improving their effectiveness. Teachers are applying the school's feedback policy consistently. Consequently, pupils are being given advice about how to improve their work.

Staff morale has improved because there is a renewed sense of purpose at the school. Pupils and students report that staff are more willing to help them with their work. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils value the support that the current staff provide for them. For example, during the enrichment period at the end of the school day, many pupils were seen receiving extra help with their mathematics learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils and students dress smartly and behave well around the school. The rooms and communal spaces are modern, well furnished and spacious. This gives the school a professional atmosphere. Pupils and students respect their environment. They treat the facilities well. No graffiti or litter was seen around the site.

Senior leaders have established better procedures for following up on pupils' absence from school. The rate of pupils' and students' attendance is improving but is still too low. The improvement is most noticeable in Year 10. These pupils' rate of attendance is approaching the national average. However, the rate of girls' attendance and that of disadvantaged pupils have not risen as far as that of other pupils.

Tutors play an important role in encouraging good attendance and punctuality. Many pupils and students travel considerable distances to attend this school and benefit from its distinctive curriculum. However, tutors' response to lateness varies across key stage 4 and key stage 5 tutor groups. This inconsistency of approach holds back further gains in attendance and punctuality.

Pupils' and students' conduct in lessons is attentive. They consistently show respect to their teachers and to each other. This enables lessons to proceed smoothly and calmly. Some pupils lack confidence in their own abilities and so there are still examples of the passive behaviour that was seen at the previous inspection. Where teaching does not make the purpose of the learning clear, and link it to the overall course aims, some pupils become demotivated.

The rate of exclusion of pupils was high in 2017 but fell in 2018. As a result of the

stability that has been achieved across the school, and more consistent use of the school's behaviour policy, the rate of exclusion has fallen further in the current academic year and is now low.

Senior leaders have made improvements to the careers advice that pupils in key stage 4 receive. Pupils are given individual guidance about their future careers in one-to-one meetings with staff. These are complemented by presentations and workshops from a variety of employers. Consequently, pupils gain good insights into employment opportunities in engineering and science. For example, during the inspection, the Royal Navy ran a workshop at school that enhanced pupils' understanding of the place of engineering in the armed services.

Sixth-form students receive careers advice through a similar blend of meetings with staff and contact with external organisations. However, the programme is less well developed than in key stage 4. Students value the taster days they are offered at universities. For example, those in engineering and electronics at the University of Southampton and visits to Cranfield University in the fields of chemistry, explosives and psychology. Students have a good understanding of the university application process, but their knowledge of apprenticeships is not as strong.

Outcomes for pupils

Key stage 4 pupils' progress in GCSE English was well below the national average in 2017 and 2018. Current pupils' work shows they are making better progress this year, but they are still not achieving at the standard that could be expected of them given their starting points in Year 10. Current pupils' progress in GCSE mathematics is higher than in English. Greater challenge in mathematics teaching is enabling pupils to develop better knowledge and understanding.

The proportion of Year 11 pupils who attained a standard pass in both GCSE English and mathematics was well below average in 2017. Although the proportion increased in 2018, it was still below the national average. Too many pupils left the school last year without these two key qualifications. However, with increased progress in mathematics, a much higher proportion of Year 11 pupils are on track to attain a standard pass in both in 2019.

Pupils' progress in GCSE science improved last year. Middle-ability pupils' progress was in line with the national average. The school's assessments of current pupils' progress show that improved outcomes in this subject are likely to continue.

Pupils' attainment was much better in 2018 than in the previous year in engineering design, engineering manufacturing and computer science. In all three of these subjects, the proportion of pupils attaining a standard pass increased significantly.

Senior leaders recognise that in the past their use of information about the progress and attainment of pupils and students has not been sharp enough. Training from

senior leaders, supported by the trust, has increased the confidence of staff in the use of assessment information. Staff now have a clear understanding of the attainment that pupils and students should be capable of achieving.

Senior leaders' efforts to improve the quality of teaching, and their strategies for using additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, have not yet had an impact on the progress these particular groups of pupils make. Weaknesses in their literacy and communication skills continue to be a significant barrier to their learning.

Sixth-form students' progress on academic courses was weak in 2017 and remained weak in 2018. In particular, students' progress on A-level science courses was not good enough last year. Approximately one third of Year 13 students are currently taking A-level courses. The school's assessment information shows that these students are on track to attain on average one grade higher per examination this year compared to last year. While this is an improvement, many pupils are still not achieving at the level they are capable of.

The majority of Year 13 students are studying the BTEC national diploma in engineering. For the past two years, students' progress on this course has been at or just above the national average. Current students' work indicates that this is likely to continue this year.

Senior leaders are now requiring sixth-form students to take part in regular tutorials which cover wider aspects of personal and social development. For example, about the importance of democratic processes. However, students' appreciation of some aspects of personal safety is not yet sufficiently developed. Senior leaders are yet to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these non-qualification activities as part of each student's individual study programme.

External support

ALET provides effective support to the school. The deputy chief executive of the trust advises and challenges the principal and senior leaders on all aspects of their work. Working together, they have developed a cohesive action plan to improve the school.

The director of education from the trust works in the school on a full-time basis. Her support and advice have been critical factors in improving the quality of teaching and learning at the school in the past five months. All teachers now have individual plans that identify their strengths and weaknesses and link to suitable professional training. Much of this training is provided by the trust. For example, teachers attended a training day at the beginning of January that was held by the trust for all staff across its schools. This event enabled teachers to share good practice efficiently.

Senior leaders have learned from the leaders of other institutions facing similar challenges. Many teachers at this school are the only teachers in their subject area. This has led to isolation in the past. Through the work of the trust, these teachers are now working with other teachers in their specialism. Teachers' knowledge and effectiveness are being enhanced as a result.