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Mr Alan Fletcher
Principal
King's Lynn Academy
Queen Mary Road
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Dear Mr Fletcher

Special measures monitoring inspection of King's Lynn Academy

Following my visit with Kay Tims, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 14 March 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 November 2016. 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.

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 interim executive board, the chief executive of the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner

and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2016.

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - trust leaders and governors hold academy leaders to account for raising standards
 - leaders evaluate the quality of teaching rigorously through a sharp analysis of pupils' progress
 - middle leaders are enabled to swiftly tackle weaker teaching and the underperformance of pupils in their subject areas
 - school priorities are understood by all staff, so that rapid improvements can be made
 - the school's agreed assessment and feedback policies are implemented consistently
 - additional funding is used strategically so that support provided for disadvantaged pupils enables them to achieve well
 - provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good so that they can learn more effectively.
- Improve the consistency of teaching, learning and assessment across the academy by:
 - equipping teachers to use assessment information to plan learning that is challenging, allows pupils to deepen their understanding and demonstrates higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able pupils
 - making sure that teachers use the agreed academy feedback protocols consistently
 - ensuring that teachers intervene quickly and effectively to correct pupils' misconceptions.
- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in English and mathematics by:
 - raising the expectations of pupils' reading and writing across the curriculum
 - ensuring that pupils develop their mastery of mathematical concepts before moving on to new learning.

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

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

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 14 March 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met you and your team of senior leaders, two groups of pupils, and the chief executive of the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust. I held a telephone conversation with the chair of the interim executive board. Together with senior leaders we observed pupils at work in lessons, and scrutinised their work in books.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, one senior leader has left the school to take up other responsibilities within the trust. A new assistant principal has been appointed to lead improvements in key stage 4. An effective subject leader has been seconded to the senior leadership team to lead improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. The school was issued with a notice from the Department for Education as it considers it to be a 'coasting school'. The school is full for entry into year 7 in September 2018.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Recent appointments to the senior leadership team have added further capacity to make improvements. You have maintained the focus on getting pupils with a history of poor attendance back into school, engaging them in learning and ensuring that older pupils are suitably prepared for examinations later this year. You have also maintained your close scrutiny of the quality of teaching, and taken action when it falls short of your expectations.

The newly established base for disadvantaged pupils is beginning to work. Leaders ensure that selected pupils receive good-quality care in a more supportive environment. This enables those pupils to feel safe, valued and more engaged in school life. The boost to pupils' confidence is clearly shown by the positive views of pupils such as, 'the base is helping me to come out of my shell'. Closer analysis of the progress made by disadvantaged pupils enables staff to identify gaps in their learning, and take action to prevent them from underachieving.

You acknowledge that the effectiveness of your middle leaders, particularly the leaders of some subjects, remains 'mixed'. A few subjects are not performing as well as they should be. Your monitoring and support is targeted toward these areas to enable leaders and teachers to increase their effectiveness. One of your most effective middle leaders has joined the leadership team to improve teaching further, by sharing best practice and leading training for staff. This is at an early stage of development but already there are emerging signs of better-quality planning of learning evident in lessons.

You have had less success in ensuring that provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good. Learning is not always planned well enough to match the ability of SEN and lower-attaining pupils. We found that at times they are unclear about what to do, and make much slower progress. This is compounded by too few teaching assistants in lessons, and a lack of suitable strategies used by teachers to enable pupils to support and learn from each other.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The overall quality of teaching is much better than it was at the time of the last inspection. Furthermore you have responded to the issues raised in the previous monitoring inspection to gain greater consistency in the presentation of pupils' work, teachers' marking and planning of tasks suited to the different abilities of pupils. Far greater accountability, routine monitoring and internal review, and staff training are all contributing to these improvements.

Our visits to lessons observed some high-quality learning and progress. This is a direct result of teachers' good subject knowledge, detailed planning and high expectations of pupils. For example, in mathematics in key stage 3 effective modelling of plotting graphical information enabled the most able pupils to complete very challenging work. In another mathematics lesson, learning was cleverly adapted to use recipes and ingredients to teach lower-attaining pupils about proportion and ratio.

Some inconsistencies have not been ironed out at this stage. Incremental improvements made to marking, planning and the management of behaviour are undermined by a small minority of teachers who do not follow the school's agreed procedures. It is unclear why this happens. Leaders' monitoring has identified and challenged some of those who do not adhere to policy and procedures, but this has not yet led to consistently effective teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

We found school to be a calm, purposeful place to be. In lessons, behaviour was managed effectively. Around school at breaks and lunchtimes, pupils conducted themselves well. In our meetings with pupils, they told us that behaviour continues to improve, and that they generally feel safe in school. Increasingly, the large majority of pupils understand the expectations of them and respond positively to staff and each other.

The issue discussed at the last monitoring inspection regarding a small minority of pupils in key stage 3 who do not behave well enough has not been fully resolved. Your records show that the proportion of pupils temporarily excluded from school remains too high. Similarly, too many pupils are sent to the reflection room each

day due to their poor behaviour. This is partly due to the higher expectations of staff and more rigorous sanctions applied for unacceptable behaviour. However, this means that currently, too many pupils are not in all of their lessons, and are therefore not fully engaged in learning. Funding for your proposal to set up a specialist unit to manage pupils with the most challenging behaviour later this year has been approved by the trust.

Monitoring of pupils' attendance shows that overall it has risen. At this stage of the year it is closer to the national average. You can point to significant gains in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils who you have targeted for improvement. Persistent absence rates have also improved, but they remain too high.

Outcomes for pupils

Since the last monitoring visit, all pupils have sat mock examinations in a wide range of subjects. This provides staff with up-to-date information about which pupils are progressing well, and who needs further support to help them achieve. It also ensures that older pupils are more familiar with testing procedures and examination technique, and are ready for the rigours of GCSE examinations later this year.

The school's latest assessment data indicates that the improvements noted at the time of the last monitoring inspection have been sustained, and built upon further. Staff are closely monitoring and mentoring all pupils in Year 11 to ensure that they achieve what they are capable of in this year's GCSE examinations. You predict that over 50% of them will attain standard pass grades in English and mathematics. This is significantly higher than the previous year's results. You also feel that following the actions already taken to strengthen teaching, reorganise the curriculum and tackle persistent absence, overall progress rates should also improve this year.

Progress is still heavily dependent on the quality of teaching, particularly the planning of tasks to match pupils' different abilities, the expectations of staff to push the most able pupils hard, and the quality of support provided in lessons for SEN and lower-attaining pupils. Over half of the disadvantaged pupils attending the new 'passion with purpose' base have made improved progress this term. Significantly, some of these pupils are achieving better than in the past because they have been encouraged to attend more regularly. Based on your latest assessment information, you feel that the gap in progress between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in the school and nationally will narrow significantly this year.

The profile of reading for pleasure remains low. Year 9 pupils who met with me feel that they need more time in school to read, and that 'library time' should be preserved so that they have a weekly lesson in reading.

External support

Trust leaders continue to hold you accountable. They have set you clear targets for raising achievement. The trust is fully supportive of the actions you are taking to improve the school. It has provided you with additional funding to strengthen your leadership team. Plans are under way to make further appointments this year to ensure that the school is suitably prepared for accommodating a significant increase in pupils in September 2018.

The trust commissioned a review of the school's work earlier this term, led by the chair of the interim executive board. This recognised the improvements being made and identified a number of strengths and weaknesses for leaders to consider. The interim executive board value your work and that of the vice-principal in securing this improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- At the time of the last monitoring inspection leaders were asked to ensure that new procedures to improve the most challenging behaviour of pupils in key stage 3 are implemented in 2018. This remains a priority for the school.