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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 Brenda Watson, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 June 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 fourth 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 school 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 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 June 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you and your team of senior leaders, a group of pupils, the chair of the interim executive board and the chief executive of the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust. Inspectors visited lessons to observe pupils' learning and progress, especially those pupils who are disadvantaged, have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour at break- and lunchtimes.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, a new vice-principal has been appointed and will take up his post later this month. A new leader of mathematics has also been appointed and will join the school next term. The school no longer has a police community safety officer on site for part of the week. New arrangements are being brokered with the other secondary school in the trust and the police to jointly fund this post. Refurbishment of part of the site to develop a new facility to accommodate pupils who are at risk of being excluded from the school has begun.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You continue to work hard to resolve the issues facing the school. Your team of senior leaders is working more cohesively to secure further improvement. Recently appointed leaders are providing further capacity to improve. Priorities are understood by all staff. They demonstrate a corporate willingness to contribute towards the school's improvement.

You have an accurate overview of the school's current effectiveness. Self-evaluation points to significant gains made in pupils' progress, behaviour and welfare, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and to improved leadership at all levels. It also recognises a few important weaknesses. You acknowledge that more needs to be done to tackle the poor behaviour and attitudes of a small minority of pupils, particularly in key stage 3. Fixed-term exclusions remain high. Persistent absence rates are also too high.

Responsibility for coordinating the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities lies with one of your vice-principals. You have recognised that changes are needed, as other leadership responsibilities take up too much of her time. Record keeping is not as sharp as it could be. A new coordinator has been identified and is currently being trained to lead this important area.

Trust leaders continue to hold you accountable for raising achievement. They are fully supportive of your work in ensuring that the school remains fully inclusive, and

meets the needs of its local community. It has provided you with additional resources to develop the 'forward step' base. This will accommodate pupils who regularly display unacceptable behaviour, meaning that those at risk of being excluded can remain on the school site. You expect this facility to be ready for use at the start of next term.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Over time, your routine monitoring of teaching and learning has held teachers to account, and led to marked improvements. Previous monitoring inspections have noted greater consistency in teachers' planning, marking and feedback, and their higher expectations of pupils. Our latest observations, which focused on lower ability pupils at work in these lessons found that teaching, and the impact it has on pupils' learning, remain too variable.

Improvements in teaching are undermined by the poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils. This issue was raised as an area for further improvement at the time of the last monitoring inspection. Low-level disruption in lessons prevents other pupils from learning. Managing this behaviour absorbs too much of teachers' time. Leaders know who these pupils are, and their backgrounds and personal needs. Actions to modify their behaviour have worked with some of them. However, a small but significant minority have not responded, and continue to misbehave. Currently, too many of them disengage from learning and are referred to the school's 'reflection room'.

Recent training is ensuring that all staff are using the agreed procedures for planning learning that is suited to pupils' different abilities. In all lessons, pupils are given a choice of purple, green and gold tasks. Pupils like this approach. They told inspectors that it helps them to choose work that is suitable for them and, when ready, they can move on to more challenging work. They value the advice from teachers to help them make the right choices. These procedures are new. More time is needed to ensure that in all lessons, tasks are suitably planned and framed to enable all pupils to understand fully what to do next and make a prompt start to their written work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

High-quality care and support for pupils underpin the school's approach to engaging pupils in learning, and encouraging their participation. Staff go out of their way to welcome pupils daily, help them to deal with personal issues affecting them, and liaise with their parents and carers.

The school remains a calm, purposeful place to be. The large majority of pupils behave well, and are polite and respectful. They say that behaviour has improved significantly, and understand the procedures used by staff to manage behaviour.

They feel that these procedures work for most pupils, but not for a small minority who regularly spoil lessons by messing about.

Attendance continues to improve gradually. Overall attendance is currently higher than it was at this stage last year. Persistent absence rates remain stubbornly high. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils regularly absent from school is too high. The large proportion of pupils temporarily excluded due to their poor behaviour presents a further challenge to improving overall attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Your leader responsible for key stage 4 has made an immediate impact by sharpening plans for raising achievement. An extensive programme of support has provided Year 11 pupils with good opportunities to catch up, re-visit previous learning and prepare them for GCSE examinations this year. The majority of them have attended classes during the Easter and half-term breaks and come at the end of each day to revise alongside others. Breakfast clubs have ensured that those turning up for morning examinations are suitably prepared. You and your leaders feel that this year, pupils are much better prepared for examinations. You forecast that higher attainment and improved progress will be achieved by the majority of these pupils.

The 'passion with purpose' base has become more established. Your leaders can point to clear examples of the impact the base is having on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Good-quality care and support, noted at the time of the last monitoring inspection, continue to provide the majority of these pupils with the confidence to re-engage in learning. This year, all disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 have turned up for their GCSE examinations. This is a significant improvement compared with the previous year, where a small minority of pupils did not sit examinations. This adversely affected the school's overall results. Your latest assessments show that, this year, the gap in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils compared with that of others is expected to narrow significantly.

Improved monitoring and analysis of pupils' progress have been extended into Year 10. These pupils are generally more able. Current forecasts indicate that they should do well in GCSE examinations next year. Your own assessment information shows that in a small minority of subjects, pupils are making slower progress than expected. Plans are in place to challenge the leaders of these subjects to take action to accelerate pupils' progress. Your monitoring also shows that the most able boys need further challenge and support to ensure that they make the progress expected of them.

Your assessment information also shows that the large majority of pupils in key stage 3, including disadvantaged pupils, are making the progress expected of them in English and mathematics. Inspectors' observations of pupils at work and scrutiny of their books did not fully corroborate this view. The quality of work seen in the

books of the less able pupils varies widely. Not all of them demonstrate the handwriting skills, or basic spelling, punctuation and grammar to produce good-quality writing. Work is often left unfinished. Teachers do not challenge this fully, and, consequently, pupils are not always helped to improve their work.

The last monitoring inspection found that less progress had been made in improving provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Further investigation by inspectors this time found that pupils with education, health and care plans receive effective, personalised support from teaching assistants. Help for other pupils in need of extra support is more variable. Teachers are tackling this by planning different tasks for pupils, enabling them to choose tasks suited to their ability. This is very new and not yet firmly established.

Inspectors found that in general, less able pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress as all other pupils. This is usually dependent on the quality of teaching. Where it is effective, they progress well. In lessons where poor behaviour disrupts learning, all pupils make much less progress.

External support

Records show that regular meetings of the interim executive board hold you and your leaders fully accountable for making improvements. Reports and updates from key leaders keep the board informed of the progress made in improving the school. The chair of the board shows a realistic understanding of the school's current performance and the further actions needed to aid its journey out of special measures.