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Mrs Denise Burrows
Headteacher
Ernesford Grange Community Academy
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Dear Mrs Burrows

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ernesford Grange Community Academy

Following my visit to your school on 17 and 18 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 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.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Coventry. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - governors have the skills and understanding to hold school leaders to account for the school's performance
 - the curriculum at key stage 4 promotes all pupils' progress
 - teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are reliable
 - pupil premium funding has a positive impact on the attendance, progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils
 - literacy and numeracy catch-up funding has a positive impact on those pupils in Year 7 who need to improve their basic skills
 - leaders evaluate training for teachers in terms of its impact on pupils' progress
 - provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures good progress
 - pastoral middle leaders become more effective at improving attendance.
- Improve attendance across Years 7 to 11 by:
 - carefully evaluating the impact of the school's strategies for the improvement of attendance to determine which strategies are effective and which are not
 - challenging and supporting parents of pupils with high levels of absence to ensure that their child's attendance improves.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and middle-ability pupils make good progress by ensuring that teachers:
 - use assessment and other information to plan activities that are well matched to pupils' needs
 - plan lessons across all subjects that develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills
 - deploy teaching assistants so that their impact is consistently positive on pupils' progress
 - consistently tackle poor behaviour so that learning is not disrupted.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 July 2018

Evidence

The inspector assessed the impact of leaders' actions taken since the last monitoring inspection.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, other leaders and staff. The inspector also met with the executive principal of the trust and considered the opinions of parents and carers through the 16 responses to Parent View.

The inspector spoke to pupils formally and informally and observed behaviour in lessons and during social time. Short visits were made to a range of lessons and tutor time on both days of the inspection. During these visits, the inspector looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. A sample of pupils' books was also examined.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's development plan. Information about safeguarding and pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and welfare was also analysed.

Context

Since the last inspection, the acting headteacher has been confirmed as the substantive headteacher. A member of staff has been promoted to the role of assistant headteacher and an assistant headteacher from Sidney Stringer Academy, responsible for teaching and learning across the trust, now line manages the humanities department.

Newly qualified teachers of drama, English, history, geography and Spanish have been appointed to start in September 2018. A second teacher in the mathematics department, a teacher of science and a key stage 2 to key stage 3 transition teacher will also begin working at the school at the start of next term. Six permanent teachers will leave the school at the end of the academic year.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders have continued to take effective action to improve the school. They have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they use this information to further improve all aspects of the school's work. They have developed a positive and aspirational culture throughout the school.

Leadership is developing at all levels. For example, department leaders have been well supported to improve their practice. They now work closely with senior

leaders to quality assure all aspects of their department's work. Consequently, they are playing a greater role in improving their areas of responsibility.

Staff value the professional development opportunities that are available to them in the school and through the trust. Best practice is shared, and staff benefit from high-quality training that is tailored to help them to improve further. Effective coaching is in place and newly qualified teachers are well supported.

New initiatives are helping to improve the school but need time to become embedded. For example, strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are beginning to have an impact on attitudes to learning, personal development, behaviour, attendance and the quality of work produced by targeted individuals. However, as this initiative is very recent, the impact of these actions cannot be fully assessed. 'Target 10', a relatively new initiative to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, will be a focus of the next inspection.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff, including new staff, are well trained and clear procedures to help pupils stay safe are used consistently. The single central record is compliant with statutory requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching has continued to improve. Systems that were in place at the time of the last monitoring inspection are now firmly embedded. Established routines are in place and there is greater consistency in the planning and delivery of lessons. There is a clear focus on learning.

Whole-school strategies are being used effectively to improve the quality of learning. Staff use information about pupils effectively to help pupils to make better progress from their different starting points. Staff now have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and they regularly challenge the most able pupils to attempt difficult tasks. Questions are used well to deepen understanding and time is now utilised more efficiently in lessons.

Teaching assistants are deployed more effectively to support learning and interventions are having a greater impact on improving pupils' progress. For example, a large majority of Year 7 pupils who have received additional support to meet the expected standards in English and mathematics have made strong progress in these subjects.

Pupils are more focused on their learning. Punctuality to lessons has improved and pupils are expected to have the correct equipment in school. Pupils regularly support each other's learning and they usually present their work well. They are now taking greater pride in their studies.

The quality of work in pupils' books has improved greatly since the last monitoring

inspection. Books are well looked after and contain more detailed work that reflects increased challenge. Pupils take opportunities to write at length and respond positively to the additional tasks that teachers set to extend their learning. The marking policy is followed consistently, and staff check that pupils are responding to their comments to improve their work. In some subjects, particularly mathematics, peer and self-assessment are used well to help pupils to improve their work.

Where teaching is most effective, pupils take more responsibility for their learning. They lead activities and use the skills that they are developing to challenge themselves and their classmates to improve the quality of their work. They are being helped to develop a love of learning.

Literacy is promoted well across the curriculum. Staff have had additional training on how to develop pupils' communication skills and pupils have been taught how to be active listeners. Staff regularly model the use of good spoken and written English and insist that pupils use sophisticated language when making verbal contributions to lessons. 'Talking points', a strategy based on research and adapted to meet the needs of the pupils in the school, is used to develop oracy to support learning. It is helping to increase pupils' confidence, improve the clarity of their expression and enhance their ability to critically evaluate their classmates' work. Pupils are using the communication skills that they are developing across the curriculum to improve their writing.

Since the last monitoring inspection, action has been taken to raise the profile of numeracy across the school. For example, an audit has identified opportunities to develop mathematical skills in other subjects. Strategies, such as the 'maths secret seven', are now in place to develop numeracy across the curriculum. However, they are not fully embedded.

Assessment practice is improving. Progress information is moderated and is more accurate now. Although staff are using assessment information more effectively to inform planning and feedback, leaders have identified this as an area that requires further development.

Purposeful activities are planned for tutor time. These activities are designed to enhance pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and improve their literacy, numeracy and communication skills. However, the quality of learning evident in tutor time does not match the quality of what takes place in other lessons. Pupils are not routinely given opportunities to re-apply strategies that they are using elsewhere in the curriculum in tutor time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Behaviour has improved considerably since the time of the last monitoring inspection. Staff have higher expectations of pupils' conduct and they are

managing pupils' behaviour more effectively. As a result, incidents of inappropriate behaviour rarely escalate into more serious misdemeanours. The school is now a calm and orderly environment. Staff consistently challenge inappropriate behaviour and behaviour in the school canteen has improved considerably. The house system and the use of rewards are also having a positive impact on improving pupils' conduct.

Exclusions and absence continue to decline, but higher proportions of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are excluded and absent than are others. Improving the attendance and reducing the exclusions of these pupils remain areas needing improvement.

Mentors help pupils develop their social and emotional well-being and resilience. Although this is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning, systems for measuring their impact are not fully developed.

National guidance and effective training have been used to improve the quality of impartial careers advice and guidance in the school. Pupils receive input about careers in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons in every year group and plans are in place to ensure that pupils begin their careers education from the start of Year 7. Staff are well informed about their responsibilities and pupils receive information about the range of options that are available to them when they leave school, including technical qualifications and apprenticeships. Staff are planning to supplement the work-related learning opportunities available in the sixth form with similarly appropriate experiences in Year 10.

Outcomes for pupils

Current pupils are making improved progress across a range of subjects in every year group. Pupils in key stage 3 are making faster progress than those in key stage 4. However, as a result of better teaching and targeted intervention, senior leaders are confidently predicting improved results in external examinations at the end of key stage 4 and key stage 5. Post-16 students continue to achieve well and almost all pupils have appropriate destinations in place for when they leave school.

Although improving, the progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and by disadvantaged pupils does not match that of others in the school. Boys continue to make slower progress than girls.

Progress is improving in modern foreign languages and humanities, but Year 10 and 11 pupils have made slower progress in these subjects than in other areas of the curriculum.

External support

The Sidney Stringer MAT continues to offer high-quality support and challenge to the school. This includes quality assurance, moderation and staff training. However, as Ernesford Grange Academy is improving, the level of support it requires is reducing.