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Mr Doug Elliott
Principal
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Dear Mr Elliott

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hillsview Academy

Following my visit with Toni Spors, Ofsted Inspector, and Gordon Watts, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 20 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to 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 Redcar and Cleveland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2017.

- Leaders and governors should take action to rapidly improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing and strengthening leadership at all levels so that all leaders are effectively evaluating the success of their actions to improve outcomes for pupils
 - monitoring and evaluating the use of additional funds for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need to catch up so that spending is precisely targeted and improves outcomes for these pupils.
- Leaders and governors should improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by:
 - ensuring that teachers have the highest expectations of what all pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons carefully to meet the needs of all pupils, so that all pupils make good progress from their starting points
 - improving and embedding the new behaviour system so that it is applied consistently by all teachers and disruption to learning rapidly reduces
 - implementing an effective whole-school literacy strategy so that pupils improve their spelling, punctuation, reading and extended writing.
- Leaders and governors should urgently improve attendance, behaviour and pupil welfare by:
 - eradicating internal truancy and preventing pupils from smoking on site
 - reducing the number of behaviour incidents and fixed-term exclusions
 - reducing persistent absence and improving attendance for all groups of pupils, particularly for those who are disadvantaged, and for students in the sixth form
 - improving the quality of the provision for personal, social, health and economic education so that all pupils in the school and students in the sixth form receive education to prepare them for their futures.
- Leaders and governors should take urgent action to ensure that safeguarding is effective by:
 - ensuring that records of bullying, attendance issues and referrals are detailed and reference action taken and associated impact
 - ensuring that pupils move safely around the building without running,

pushing or shoving.

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 March 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised school documents. Inspectors met with the principal and members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors met with middle leaders, a group of staff and groups of pupils from all year groups. Inspectors also talked informally to pupils during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors observed pupils' arrival and departure from school. Inspectors visited a number of lessons, many of which were conducted jointly with school leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in their books. A telephone conversation was held with the new chair of the governing board. An inspector met with the executive principal who was representing the Academies Enterprise Trust.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in December, five members of staff have left the school. Leaders have not replaced these staff as the school is currently undergoing a staffing restructure. Instead, leaders have appointed temporary teachers. The executive principal is retiring at Easter. A new assistant principal was appointed in January 2018 to improve behaviour and attendance.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders are well aware of what needs to be done to improve Hillsview Academy. They continue to evaluate the impact of their actions. However, the pace of change is still not rapid enough. Too many lessons continue to be disrupted by poor behaviour. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are still too low. Leaders have introduced a range of policies and systems to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, the impact of these policies is limited due to their inconsistent implementation.

Since the previous monitoring visit, middle leaders have engaged in training to improve their skills for checking the quality of provision within their subjects. Expectations of middle leaders have increased. The implementation of the 'in a nutshell' evaluation document is helping middle leaders to focus more on the progress of different groups of pupils. However, despite increased training, middle leaders have an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders acknowledge there is further work to do to make sure that middle leaders make accurate judgements about the quality of provision and ensure full adherence to school policies within their subjects.

Due to staff absence, some elements of reading provision have halted for Year 7 pupils who need catch up. Despite this, leaders can evidence some improvement in reading ages for some groups of pupils. Leaders are acting on the recommendations

from the pupil premium review. However, they are not clear enough about the impact of actions on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains an area for improvement. Although there has been a slight improvement this half term, leaders are aware that persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils remains too high.

The trust is beginning to implement the recommendations from the external review of governance. As a result, the trust has appointed a new chair of the governing board. The new chair has a clear vision for improving governance. He is aware of what the school needs to do to improve. However, the governing board need to hold leaders more effectively to account to ensure that the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection are addressed with increased urgency.

More effective individual plans are now in place for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. There is an increasing focus on these pupils' academic and personal targets. However, the special educational needs leader acknowledges that there is still much work to do to ensure that teachers plan more effectively to meet the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

During the monitoring visit, safeguarding documents were reviewed. Documentation meets current requirements. Referrals to outside agencies are made in a timely manner. Site safety has improved and staff report that former pupils no longer come on to the school site. However, inspectors witnessed pupils pushing and shoving each other. A number of pupils do not follow the 'keep to the left' system in corridors. Inspectors observed some incidents of unsafe behaviour during lesson changeover.

Pupils express concern about the number of temporary teachers. The staffing structure is currently under review.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers feel well supported by senior leaders. They talk positively about the increasing opportunities for professional development. Although leaders focus on raising standards and expectations, the impact of this work has not led to rapid enough improvement. Too many teachers continue to have low expectations of what pupils can achieve. Work is often too easy. Consequently, pupils are not challenged enough in their learning. Inspectors saw evidence that, occasionally, expectations set by some teachers were higher than those set by others. It was clear that on those occasions, pupils rise to the challenge and focus more effectively on their work. However, this is not the norm.

The school policy of pupils responding to teacher feedback is not consistently applied. Work in books shows limited responses from pupils to teacher feedback. Although displays are evident around the school showing examples of good pieces of written work, the literacy strategy is having little impact on developing pupils'

extended writing skills. Leaders acknowledge that the implementation of the school's literacy strategy remains a key priority.

Behaviour in lessons continues to be a barrier to pupils' learning and progress. The school behaviour policy of 'ready, respectful, safe' is having limited impact on improving pupils' attitudes toward their learning. Although some pupils told inspectors that behaviour has improved, too many pupils told inspectors that poor behaviour continues to disrupt their learning. Pupils said this was more evident when they have a temporary teacher. Inspectors witnessed pupils being disrespectful to their teachers. This occurs in lessons and in corridors. Although there has been a recent reduction in the number of pupils removed from lessons, the number of pupils removed from lessons remains too high.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils report that there are still instances of smoking on the school site. They told inspectors that although leaders deal with this, pupils simply move to another area of the school to smoke.

Internal truancy continues to decline. However, there are too many pupils who are slow to get to lessons.

Some pupils told inspectors that staff deal with bullying incidents more effectively than in the past. However, too many pupils continue to express concern about bullying. Some pupils told inspectors that they do not feel safe in school as a consequence.

Inspectors heard inappropriate language from some pupils in corridors, and in some lessons. Although there is good staff presence around the school, pupils frequently do not respond to staff requests. Some pupils demonstrate disrespectful behaviour towards members of staff when asked to follow simple requests, for example when asked to take their coats off in the building.

Absence rates remain high. However, attendance has improved this half term. A higher proportion of pupils have 100% attendance compared to this time last year. Leaders continue to monitor attendance patterns regularly. Although persistent absence has reduced this half term, it remains significantly above the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Students' attendance in the sixth form remains too low. Leaders are fully aware that attendance needs to improve. They acknowledge that the slight improvements in attendance, seen this half term, need to be sustained over time in order to increase more rapidly overall rates of attendance.

Fixed-term exclusions have reduced this term. The recent introduction of 'The Bridge 2', where pupils receive their education in another area of the school instead of being excluded, is helping to reduce repeat exclusions. However, the quality of

learning in 'The Bridge 2' is variable. Despite some improvement, leaders understand that fixed-term exclusions remain too high, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' punctuality to school remains an issue. On the day of the monitoring visit, 93 pupils were late to school. This is not untypical.

Some sixth-form students told inspectors that they do not sign in and out at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Leaders need to ensure that students adhere to the school's signing-in-and-out procedures so that they know where students are at all times.

A comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education programme is now in place. However, the implementation and delivery of the programme, through tutor time, remains too variable, leading to an inconsistent experience for pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

The progress made by Year 11 pupils in their GCSE examinations last year was well below that of similar pupils nationally. To try to compensate for a legacy of poor teaching, staff from Outwood Grange Academies Trust are providing additional support for current Year 11 pupils in English, mathematics and science. The aim of this additional support is to reduce gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. However, it is too early to ascertain the full impact of this support on pupils' progress. School information currently shows that pupils' attainment and progress are not improving quickly enough.

The number of students in the sixth form has declined since the last monitoring visit. Student numbers are set to reduce further next year. A high proportion of students in the sixth form are on track to meet their target grades this year. Students talk positively about the small class sizes and the support they receive from their teachers.

External support

The trust continues to provide consultant support for English, mathematics and science. This support has not brought about rapid improvement since the last monitoring visit. The trust has recently brokered additional support from Outwood Grange Academies Trust to provide help so that pupils in Year 11 catch up in English, mathematics and science. The trust has also recently provided additional support, to improve teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour and attendance, from two other schools. However, it is too early to evaluate the full impact of this support.