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3 December 2015

Mr Lee Taylor  
Head of School  
The Telford Park School  
Grange Avenue  
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Telford  
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Dear Mr Taylor

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Telford Park School**

Following my visit with Patrick Amieli, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 4–5 November 2015, 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 which 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 which took place in February 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement which 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:

The academy is not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of

State, the Chair of the education advisory board and the Director of Children's Services for Telford and Wrekin.

Yours sincerely

Chris Chapman

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2015:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that every student is given the opportunity to make the progress they should and attain the standards they are capable of, by:
  - ensuring teachers use data about students' prior ability to plan learning that takes into account what students already know and can do
  - encouraging teaching that engages students' interest, challenges them to think hard and be less dependent upon adult support
  - ensuring that teacher assessment of students' work is accurate so that predictions can be relied upon
  - improving the quality of marking so that it helps students improve and take pride in their work extending the focus on developing and promoting good literacy skills so that literacy becomes an integral part of teaching and learning in all subjects
  - developing the quality of teachers' questioning skills so that they are able to probe and stretch students' thinking and oral skills.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels including governance. In particular:
  - ensure that processes for monitoring the quality of education (in terms of achievement, teaching and behaviour) are systematic, rigorous and effective, result in prompt identification of underperformance and urgent and effective actions to bring about improvement
  - ensure leaders model the high standards required of all staff, for example in terms of marking and dealing with behavioural issues
  - improve the curriculum, including the structure of the day, so that it engages students, makes them want to attend and do well and ensures that they develop work-related skills to prepare them for their adult lives
  - ensure that the quality of education provided for students who are removed from normal classes because their behaviour is a concern and those students who are educated off-site for part of the week is of a quality that enables them to make at least the progress they are capable of
  - ensure that governors have the skills to hold academy leaders to account and to take firm action when performance falls below that expected.
  
- Senior leaders must develop a culture of high expectations about all aspects of the education students receive so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.

- Improve behaviour and safety so that all students are given the opportunity to learn well and feel safe by:
  - introducing a clear and transparent behaviour policy that is consistently applied by all staff, including all leaders, and is linked clearly to improving learning
  - improving systems to record, monitor and evaluate attendance, lateness and behavioural incidents so that leaders and staff can identify quickly when and where problems arise and take urgent and effective action to bring about improvement
  - ensuring that all students feel safe in all areas of the academy
  - raising students' expectations of what is acceptable behaviour towards other students or staff.
  
- Improve students' achievement by ensuring that, from their starting points, all students, including the most able students, disadvantaged students, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, make at least the progress they should. In addition:
  - ensure that students whose behaviour means they are removed from normal lessons and placed in small group or one-to-one provision, and students who are educated off-site for some of the week, learn well
  - improve the literacy skills of all students whose reading ages are below their chronological ages in order to ensure they can participate confidently in lessons in all subjects.
  
- 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 academy'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 second monitoring inspection on 4–5 November**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you, as the head of school, the executive head of school, members of the senior leadership team and middle leaders. I also met with the Chief Executive Officer of the Community Academies Trust, who are now the academy sponsor. Inspectors spoke to pupils during break times and lunchtimes and in classrooms, and met formally with groups of pupils. Inspectors visited lessons and scrutinised academy documents, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and records of pupils' progress and attainment.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, considerable contextual changes have taken place. The academy moved into newly built premises, constructed under the government's Building Schools for the Future programme in September 2015. The academy has been renamed The Telford Park School. On 1 November 2015 the academy became officially sponsored by the Community Academies Trust.

A staffing restructuring took place towards the end of the last academic year across all four of the academies who were then part of the Telford Co-operative Multi-Academy Trust. This has resulted in significant shifts to both the staffing and leadership of the academy.

The academy has a new head of school and a new leadership team. The executive head of school for The Telford Langley School, which was formerly the Phoenix Academy, also oversees the work of The Telford Park School. A number of senior and middle leader posts are shared across The Telford Park School and The Telford Langley School, including five directors of learning, the director of inclusion and three deputy headteachers.

Five former members of teaching staff at Lakeside Academy are part of the current teaching team in The Telford Park School. The academy currently has three vacancies for full-time members of staff and one vacancy for a part-time member of staff, all within the mathematics, English and science departments. A director of learning in English has been appointed to start in January. In the interim, a deputy headteacher is overseeing this role.

Governance of the academy is now undertaken by an education advisory board.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Outcomes for pupils who left the academy having completed their examinations in 2015 remained inadequate. The academy's analysis of provisional results shows that little improvement was seen on the previous year and the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectation of what pupils' should achieve by the time they leave school, were once again not met. Only 27% of pupils secured 5 or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics, which, though an incremental rise in the previous year, is very likely to remain significantly below the national average. Only one third of pupils made expected progress in mathematics and less than half made expected progress in English. Attainment was too low across a range of other subjects. All key groups underachieved considerably, including those pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. Gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates widened, showing that additional funding has been wasted.

These continued low standards reflect the ineffective impact of actions taken by former leaders of the academy and a pace of improvement that is far too slow.

The examination results were also a sizeable shortfall from the academy's predictions of what pupils were expected to achieve. This is because practices to assess the performance of pupils have been inaccurate. Current leaders have now acquired new assessment information and are in the process of rigorously quality assuring this in order that it accurately reflects the current and potential achievement of pupils. However, leaders fully accept that, at this stage, the information they have about pupils' progress and attainment is not reliable. Until this is secured, it will be a substantial barrier to improvement.

Pupils in the academy are beginning to engage better with their learning in lessons. However, there is insufficient evidence of sustained progress in their books and work over time. This is because new teaching has not been in place for long enough. Considerable deficiencies in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding persist due to poor teaching in the past. Current leaders recognise the need for pupils to catch up against a legacy of past underachievement. Target setting is now more ambitious and is beginning to raise teachers' and pupils' expectations. Pupils in Year 11 are regularly attending sessions after school in order to help them to accelerate their learning.

Too little has been done to tackle the weak standards of literacy and numeracy of pupils in the academy. Plans are in place to address this. Leaders now have a baseline assessment of all pupils' reading and spelling ages. Interventions are being planned through corrective reading, writing and numeracy programmes. Leaders intend to introduce a whole-school reading programme. However, insufficient action has been taken to have made any difference to the deficit in pupils' basic skills.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Teaching at the academy is not yet good enough to enable pupils to make the progress that they need to in order to catch up on ground lost and thus raise achievement to the standards required. Too many of the issues identified in the previous inspection still continue to hinder learning in the classroom.

There are, however, some signs of improvement. Higher expectations of behaviour are beginning to shape better attitudes to learning. One pupil in Year 11 described a palpable shift in the climate for learning in lessons when he stated that the academy is now focused on 'educating pupils'. In most lessons, pupils now get on with their work and listen to their teachers. This is a marked difference from what I saw during my previous visit. In many lessons, positive relationships between teachers and pupils are helping learning to take place. Some pupils still have to be prompted and encouraged by their teachers to get on with their work. Sometimes when the work does not captivate pupils' interests, they can become bored and restless, for example if certain activities go on for too long. This means that their progress slows. Some teachers do not pick up on this quickly enough.

Many lessons have a clear sense of direction and structure. Some emerging practices are beginning to help teachers to better plan learning that builds on pupils' skills. For example in English and mathematics, teachers are beginning to use the information that they gather from tests to work out what skills, knowledge and understanding pupil lack so that they can plan lessons that fill in these gaps. This practice is still in its early days. Too few teachers are able to use the information that they gather about pupils' learning and progress well enough to inform their lesson planning. This means that the work set for pupils is not always matched to their abilities and consequently some pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. Teachers do not systematically check the learning of pupils during lessons. As a result, pupils' misconceptions can remain unchallenged and sometimes pupils are moved on to new tasks without having secured what they need to learn. In these instances, the less-able pupils do not receive the support they need quickly enough and the most able are not challenged sufficiently.

Application of the new marking policy is inconsistent. The comments that teachers write are not always read or acted upon by pupils. At times, the comments offered are too vague to be helpful as they do not link to the skills pupils are learning. Consequently, this practice does not always have an impact on pupils' learning and many pupils cannot articulate clearly what they need to do to improve their work. Although some teachers are now focusing more on correcting pupils' spelling and punctuation errors when marking pupils' work, this practice remains patchy. Teachers have not adopted the approaches they need to drive up standards of literacy across the academy.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils are unanimous that standards of behaviour have improved rapidly in the academy since September. Raised expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves are underpinned by clear consequences of non-compliance. These standards have been rigorously reinforced by academy leaders. Pupils say that staff now apply sanctions consistently and that this is making a difference. Some older pupils appear to be genuinely surprised at this, citing a distinction between their experiences of past initiatives that have either petered out, or been adopted unevenly by teachers, and the determination and relentless of the current culture. Indeed, some bemoan the 'strictness' of the academy and the way in which 'every tiny thing is picked up'. This is a positive change.

Sensible behaviour was exhibited around the academy site, including in areas such as the canteen. This is supported by the highly visible presence of academy staff and leaders. Pupils are smartly dressed and wear their new uniforms with pride. Older pupils commented how they feel that this uniform projects a more studious sense of identity that is helping to improve the public's perception of the academy. High standards of behaviour were also seen when inspectors observed an assembly. Pupils entered in a calm, orderly manner and listened attentively to the police community support officer who delivered important messages about the dangers of fireworks. The conduct of pupils was positively reinforced by the pupils' head of house and the speaker, helping pupils to feel a sense of pride in their behaviour. Movement to lessons is also more efficient than previously. Inspectors saw no examples of serious disruption in lessons and pupils say that negative behaviour interrupts learning far less frequently than in the past.

The academy's records demonstrate that there is a decline in the type of serious behavioural incidents that pupils report occurred in the past. The majority of incidents recorded now relate to the enforcement of learning behaviours and low-level disruption. Bullying records show that incidents of bullying this year are rarer than previous years. Most pupils say that they feel safe around the academy site and that the supervision of teachers is helping this.

As part of the academy's strategy to tackle negative behaviour, fixed-term exclusions, which were already too high during my previous visit, have increased. Leaders view this as a short-term strategy. I will be looking to see that these figures are reducing quickly. Attendance remains too low and in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. This is not improving quickly enough. Both absence and exclusions figures are too high for vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those pupils with special educational needs. In some lessons visited, it was clear that irregular attendance was impacting on pupils' learning over time.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

Although insufficient effective action has taken place since the academy was placed in special measures in February, there has been a discernible acceleration in the pace of improvements since September. New leaders have acted with drive and determination to alter the culture and ethos of the academy, sensibly seizing the opportunity offered by the move to a buildings, with many new staff, as a 'fresh start' for the academy.

Higher expectations of both staff and pupils are now coupled with the implementation of far more robust policies and systems to enable leaders to monitor, evaluate and hold others to account for improving the work of the academy. However, current leaders, and these systems, have not been in place long enough to have secured an impact on enough of those aspects of the academy's work that need improving.

Some key areas that need tackling have been too slow to start. This includes deployment of additional funding to quicken the progress of pupils who enter the academy with lower than average attainment on entry, and pupil premium funding. Leaders have now commissioned an external review of the use of pupil premium. However, this is nine months since the previous inspection took place. Although leaders now have plans in place to use this funding better and are working to carefully identify the needs of disadvantaged pupils, these plans have not yet been implemented. Given the weak achievement of disadvantaged pupils and the issues surrounding pupils' basic skills, this is not good enough.

There have been clear weaknesses in the identification of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs. Leaders are currently in the process of reviewing and updating the academy's registers. Until this is done, the needs of some pupils are not being properly met.

A strategy for improving the quality of teaching in the academy has now been introduced. This is in its early phases. Leaders have yet to gather a thorough, diagnostic analysis of the quality of teaching in the academy. Performance management systems are now in place to support the continuing development of teachers and leaders, and hold them to account for improving the quality of teaching and for securing an impact on the progress and attainment of the pupils that they teach. These procedures gather together a suitably wide range of evidence to monitor and evaluate the performance of teachers. The deputy headteacher who oversees staff development has quality assured the targets set for all staff to ensure that they meet the academy's aspirations.

Middle leaders understand their roles and responsibilities well. They recognise their crucial part in driving forward improvements in their areas and have an awareness of what needs to be done. At the heart of their improvement strategies is the need to

secure robust assessment practices that enable teaching and interventions to be better matched to the needs of pupils. These leaders have not been in post long enough to secure an impact, particularly on the quality of teaching in their teams.

Safeguarding meets requirements. Effective partnerships with the local authority and other agencies underpin robust referral systems to keep pupils safe from harm. Although induction training has taken place, staff have not currently undertaken mandatory safeguarding training. This has now been sourced and needs to be completed as a matter of urgency. Staff have been issued with the latest government guidance on safeguarding. When inspectors spoke to staff they found that some were not sufficiently conversant with this. Leaders need to ensure all staff have read, understood and digested this guidance.

The curriculum, including the timings of the academy day, is now better organised. For example, additional time is now allocated to core subjects, in order to support the much-needed improvements in these areas. An inherited narrowness in the range of subject choices undertaken by Year 10 pupils is currently being explored, with a view to improving this offer. Plans are in place to ensure that future Key Stage 4 pupils receive a more suitable choice of subjects. These plans are not yet finalised.

Plans for improving the academy are strengthened. These now reflect a clear and coherent improvement strategy. An overarching strategic plan is broken down into 100-day plans that drive forward the implementation of new initiatives within clear timescales. These now feature more measurable targets against which success can be evaluated. Thus these plans are now better positioned to hold leaders to account. However, it is still not always clear enough who is responsible for monitoring the impact of actions taken.

The former governing body were dissolved towards the end of the last academic year. Interim governance duties are performed by an education advisory board. This board is providing a clear strategic direction to academy leaders. Clear reporting procedures are enabling this board to gain an understanding of key aspects of the academy's performance and hold leaders to account for making improvements. This reporting is, however, in its early days and until monitoring and evaluation systems have had time to embed, does not yet provide a sharp enough analysis of areas such as progress and attainment, and the quality of teaching.

Falling numbers on roll are a considerable challenge to the future of the academy. The sponsor has worked effectively to secure the financial probity of the academy amidst this. Leaders are working closely with primary schools and parents to increase the number of pupils who enter the academy in Year 7 for future years.

## **External support**

The Community Academies Trust, which now sponsors the Telford Park Academy, has played a crucial role in removing barriers to the academy's progress and putting in place a clear strategy for the academy's improvement. This strategy has entailed a wide-reaching staffing restructure across all academies that were formerly part of the Telford Co-operative Multi-Academy Trust. This has resulted in significant changes to the leadership of the academy and of teaching staff. Proactive work with the academy in the months prior to the sponsor officially taking over the running of the academy has ensured that since the beginning of the academic year leaders have been adopting the core values and systems of the trust. As a result, the structures, mechanisms and foundations are now in place to begin to secure sustainable improvements. These now need to be embedded and their impact realised.

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the sponsor has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that a statement of action has been produced that is fit for purpose. I have requested some revisions and these are to be sent to me by the end of this term at the latest.