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8 December 2016

Ms Bec Osborne  
The Samuel Lister Academy  
Cottingley New Road  
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West Yorkshire  
BD16 1TZ

Dear Ms Osborne

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Samuel Lister Academy**

Following my visit with Rebekah Taylor, Ofsted Inspector, and Kirsty Godfrey, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 22 and 23 November 2016, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2016.

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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school'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.

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

Yours sincerely

John Young  
**Senior Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2016

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so that improving pupils' outcomes is more rapid by:
  - ensuring that leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching give higher regard to the standards of pupils' and students' work over time and published performance data on progress and attainment
  - ensuring that newly appointed leaders and teachers rapidly set about improving the quality of teaching and rates of progress, especially in mathematics and science
  - ensuring that sixth-form students on academic pathways make at least expected progress
  - ensuring that the progress of all sixth-form students, including those who have special educational needs or disability, is checked regularly to ensure that interventions can be timely and effective
  - governors providing greater levels of challenge regarding the impact that leaders and managers are having, and fulfilling their statutory duties, making sure all that school policies are reviewed, amended and ratified in a timely manner and these are reflected on the school website
  - making sure that successful strategies to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes are more effectively shared and embedded to improve teaching and build capacity.
  
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment so that they rapidly improve pupils' outcomes by making sure that:
  - all teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - all teachers adhere to the school's marking and feedback policy and make sure that it has the desired impact on pupils' progress
  - all teachers confidently use assessment information to deliver lessons that are sufficiently engaging and challenging for all pupils
  - all teachers set suitably challenging homework in line with school expectations
  - there are sufficient numbers of well-trained additional adults to support the growing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
  
- Improve the behaviour and attendance of pupils by:
  - making sure that all teachers consistently follow the school's behaviour policy and have high expectations of all pupils' behaviour to eradicate low-level disruption affecting learning
  - continuing to develop strategies to improve attendance, especially for girls and those who are disadvantaged

- reducing persistent absence rates and reducing the numbers of fixed-term exclusions
  - accurately recording and analysing punctuality and developing strategies to ensure that fewer pupils arrive to school or lessons late.
- Improve careers information, advice and guidance so that pupils and sixth-form students are better informed and feel more confident about the choices available to them both at key stage 4 and after the sixth form.

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

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 22 November 2016 to 23 November 2016**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, other school leaders and staff and two members of the interim executive board (IEB). HMI also met with the sponsor's director of school improvement and the headteacher of Feversham College. Documents, such as your improvement plans and your reviews of progress against the areas for improvement, were evaluated. Inspectors visited 32 lessons covering 16 subjects and every year group. HMI also visited your isolation facility.

### **Context**

Since the school was judged to require special measures, several teachers have left the school, including senior and middle leaders. A number of other teachers have resigned and will be leaving shortly. Several staff are long-term absentees as a result of illness, including the special educational needs coordinator and the head of English. Several new appointments have been made to replace the staff that have left and a new assistant principal, although appointed, will not take up his post until January 2017. Two teachers are on maternity leave in the humanities and English departments. There are nine supply staff working in the school. In addition, the school has several newly qualified teachers and Teach First staff who were appointed prior to the school going into special measures. The sponsor's directors of learning are supporting the leadership and management of science, English, mathematics and the sixth form. The sponsor has enlisted the services of three improvement partners to work with the school.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Leaders have laid what they feel are firm structural and strategic foundations, which they believe will rapidly improve the school's effectiveness going forward. But, given the time that has already elapsed and the maximum time remaining until the school will be re-inspected, there is insufficient evidence of demonstrable impact towards the removal of special measures. The extent of the progress said to have been made against the various milestones linked to the areas for improvement has been exaggerated, which in turn calls into question the robustness of the school's quality assurance protocols. As a matter of urgency, leaders must significantly increase their impact if they are to stand any chance of eradicating the major inadequacies and inconsistencies in provision and outcomes in the school within required timescales. They also accept that instituting more robust and rigorous monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance processes will increase the quality, integrity and impact of their intervention and assessment strategies.

A number of A-level courses that have underperformed over time have been removed from the curriculum, including mathematics and science. Students report that they are receiving some suitable careers advice and guidance, which is helping to inform the choices they are making at both key stage 4 and key stage 5.

An example of the shortcomings in leadership and governance is the fact that the school has not always ensured that suitable references were sought prior to staff being appointed. Similarly, previously identified issues with the website have still not been wholly addressed. A pupil premium review was not undertaken in a timely manner and the review has had no impact to date. The review of governance was timely and a number of the recommendations were actioned by the IEB. However, there is limited evidence of impact at this point. The improvement plan is ambitious and is based on the school's effectiveness being judged to be good overall by the time of the fourth monitoring visit. This does not appear realistic at this stage, given the modest signs of improvement currently apparent.

The minutes of governing body meetings indicate that the IEB has taken various steps to challenge and support the school's leaders to improve their effectiveness in driving improvements. They accept that currently there is insufficient evidence of impact from all parties concerned, including themselves.

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

It was crystal clear from inspectors' observation of pupils' learning, scrutiny of pupils' work and their assessment information, along with discussions with pupils about their knowledge, understanding and skills, that the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress is extremely inconsistent. The gulf between the most and least effective practice in the school is huge. Interventions for pupils who need additional support to help them to catch up and pupils who speak English as an additional language, and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are at an early stage of development. Assertions of improved impact for these groups are based on subjective hearsay rather than hard evidence.

Inspectors saw some highly effective teaching which was having a good impact. However, this was in the minority. Inspectors also saw staff struggling to meet the varying needs of mixed-ability classes in key stage 3 in particular and this invariably resulted in a deterioration in behaviour which slowed pupils' learning. Some staff do not have high expectations of what pupils can achieve or a secure understanding of what the next steps in pupils' learning should be. This results in a lack of challenge and focus, which proved detrimental to pupils' engagement, aspirations and progress. The situation is compounded by ongoing turbulence in staffing which means that pupils have had a number of different teachers in a relatively short space of time. This lack of stability and opportunity to forge secure relationships is a factor in the poor rates of progress apparent generally in key stage 3. In key stages 4 and 5, the situation is less acute. Although there remain several subjects of concern, inspectors were encouraged by the generally positive learning atmosphere

and evidence of accelerated progress they gathered. There are some vulnerable staff in the school, including some of the newly qualified and Teach First staff, who would benefit from additional support at this vital stage of their fledgling careers.

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

Leaders have introduced a positive discipline behaviour strategy which they feel has made a significant difference to the standard of behaviour in the school. The evidence inspectors gathered from first-hand observations of pupils in lessons and at social times, scrutiny of school records and discussions with pastoral staff and lead senior staff do not support this view. Current levels of exclusions, isolations and detentions are extremely high. Inspectors also witnessed low-level disruption and more wilful poor behaviour which was affecting learning. It is accepted that the baseline may have been low, but inspectors concluded that the status quo remains unacceptable and needs to improve as a matter of urgency. Social times are policed well, underpinned by a high staff presence. When left unsupervised, pupils can be boorish on corridors. Inspectors also observed bullying. In meetings with pupils, they confirmed that this was not uncommon. In some classrooms, staff have effective behaviour management strategies and the learning atmosphere is purposeful. However, the strategy is not embedded throughout the school and not all staff apply it consistently. This is confusing for pupils and dilutes the potential impact as staff have different thresholds of expectation for pupils' behaviour. Despite raising the profile of attendance, increasing pupils' awareness of the negative impact that poor attendance can have on their learning and the introduction of a reward system, rates of attendance remain lower and the incidence of persistent absence is much higher than national averages. Punctuality has improved but remains an issue.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

In 2016, progress and attainment outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 4 were unacceptable in mathematics, science, languages and humanities. In particular, disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils who are disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and White British pupils did not fare well. Outcomes in English were generally stronger and not significantly different from national averages across groups. The school fell well short of its performance targets based on pupils' starting points. In 2016, key stage 5 students' outcomes improved on those secured in 2015, especially in academic subjects and for students who successfully re-took their GCSEs in English and mathematics. While there remains some inconsistency in subject performance, there is an upward trend overall and students continue to excel in vocational courses.

The school's latest data shows an increased proportion of pupils in key stage 4 on track to reach their targets. This is counter-balanced by the large majority of pupils in key stage 3 across the large majority of the 12 subjects they study not currently on track to reach their targets, which does not bode well for the future outcomes at

the school. Inspectors' observations confirm an inconsistent picture in pupils' and students' performance. Issues are most acute for disadvantaged pupils, the most able, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and White British pupils. The latest performance data for key stage 5 students shows more strengths than weaknesses in students' progress across subjects.

### **External support**

The sponsor does not have the internal infrastructure or human resource capacity to provide and sustain the wide-ranging ongoing operational and strategic support the school desperately needs if it is going to improve rapidly and exit the special measures category in a timely fashion. In recognition of this, the sponsor has brokered alliances with a number of external partners to provide the 'hands-on' direction and strategic expertise the school urgently requires. Feversham College, which is judged as outstanding by Ofsted, has been engaged to provide senior and middle leadership capacity and to increase the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. Rodillian Multi Academy Trust has been commissioned to support improvements in behaviour. The consultancy firm B11 Education has a brief to provide periodic monitoring, evaluation and challenge to the school in relation to progress against the areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection in May 2016. The available evidence indicates that despite the raft of actions that have taken place, the impact of these various partners has been negligible to date. Going forward, it is vital that the school secures full value for money from any alliances it forges. Equally, the school needs to take full account of the expert guidance it is receiving and implement all agreed strategies wholeheartedly to avoid the dilution of impact evident in a number of areas.

- Leaders and governors must ensure that they always strictly adhere to the principles of the legislation and guidance on the safer recruitment of staff and their own published recruitment procedures relating to seeking suitable references.