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16 October 2014

Ms Lena Wheatley
Interim Headteacher
Emslie Morgan Alternative Provision School (EMAPS)
235 Leasowe Road
Wallasey
Merseyside
CH45 8RE

Dear Ms Wheatley

Special measures monitoring inspection of Emslie Morgan Alternative Provision School (EMAPS)

Following my visit to your school on 14 and 15 October 2014, 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2013. 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 school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures. The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2013

- Improve teaching overall so that it is good or better in all year groups by:
 - ensuring science and ICT are taught by suitably skilled teachers
 - ensuring greater consistency in the practice of teaching staff
 - raising teachers' expectations about the amount and quality of work they should be expecting of students
 - ensuring that teachers set work that is appropriate to individual students' needs and makes them think and work hard
 - making sure that teachers provide lessons which engage and interest students so they will want to attend them.

- Improve students' behaviour and attendance by:
 - making sure that all staff apply school rules consistently in all situations, and with all students
 - ensuring all staff manage effectively minor misbehaviours in the classroom
 - developing strategies and approaches that encourage students to attend more regularly.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by:
 - ensuring that the local authority and management committee understand and fulfil their respective roles, including the performance management of the headteacher
 - ensuring that leaders and managers do more to check the impact of what they do on improving the school's performance
 - making certain that all subjects including science and ICT are led and managed by effective, permanent members of staff
 - establishing how much money is received through the pupil premium and making sure this is used effectively to improve outcomes for students known to be eligible for support through this funding
 - providing practical equipment for students to use in science lessons and up-to-date reliable computers and other equipment to support teaching and learning in ICT.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 October 2014

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. I observed all Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 classes being taught on site, talked with students both formally and informally and looked at a range of their books in lessons. I scrutinised a range of documents including the single central record, the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching, the behaviour and safety of students, the achievement of students and attendance information.

Context

The interim headteacher remains in post. A teacher of art has joined the school and food technology has been added to the curriculum.

The number of students on roll has increased from 82 to 91 since my last monitoring inspection, consisting of 17 students in Key Stage 3 and 74 students in Key Stage 4.

The vacancy for a parent governor has not been filled.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Although there are signs of improvement, attainment levels remain too low, mainly as a result of poor attendance by some students and there is still work to be done to raise achievement. However, of the students who regularly attended school and sat the GCSE examinations, half gained their expected grades in mathematics and around a third gained their expected grade or above in science and English. Just over half of the students gained full vocational qualifications last year and a third are continuing their qualification into a second year. Many of the students continued their studies at college when they left at the end of Year 11 and the success of the transition to college or the work place is soon to be evaluated.

All subject teachers have analysed students' progress. However, some analysis is not sufficiently robust to inform their subject development plans. The school has plans to work with other local schools to ensure that baseline assessments give accurate information about students' starting points so the school knows how effective it is in improving academic outcomes for the students.

Pupil premium funds (additional government money) were used to improve the spelling and reading ages of students. The strategies were successful in improving most students' gains; however, the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their peers is not closing quickly enough. As a result, the school has

further targeted literacy support for some students. An external specialist is working with the teacher in English lessons to target specific literacy skills. This partnership enables the teacher to coach others in the techniques and spread good practice in the school.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved. Classrooms are well equipped and good learning environments. For example, most contain displays for students to plot the skills and knowledge they have acquired and discuss their progress with the teacher. Some students explained how this helped them work on an area they found difficult, as they could see the need to fill gaps in their knowledge or skills. However, this sharing of progress information is not being used consistently well across subjects to help all students improve their learning.

Teachers plan lessons more effectively and incorporate the specific needs of individual students in their plans. Literacy and numeracy skills are incorporated into lesson plans and, as a result, are taught in all subjects. Marking and feedback to students is generally positive and focused on how students can improve their work. However, this is not applied consistently across the school to challenge students to deepen and extend their learning.

Teaching assistants are linked to subjects, which means they have a better understanding of the subject, work as a team in the classroom and are better able to support students' learning. Teaching staff are very positive about the impact of recent training, especially the training and resources Sefton Education Trust shared with teachers. For example, many teachers display examples of high quality students' work to raise the aspirations of students in lessons. Teaching staff are positive about the future links with the trust and are working cooperatively to improve their teaching skills.

Teachers are starting to use data more intelligently to identify ways in which they can improve teaching and learning in their subjects. However, they are drawing too much on their analysis of examination data and need to spread their nets more widely and consider data that inform them about students' progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is improving. Students move more freely around school and potential bottlenecks have been removed. As a result, the movement around school is more orderly and the atmosphere is calmer. Students' work is neatly displayed in corridors as well as in classrooms, which reflects a continued commitment to the learning environment by staff and students. Staff are applying the behaviour policy more consistently and supporting each other, and the students, to take a shared responsibility for improving behaviour both within and outside school. This team

approach is having a positive effect on students. For example, Key Stage 3 students appear calmer and better able to use self-control: this enables them to work more cooperatively with each other.

However, out of class incidents and fixed-term exclusions in Key Stage 4 remained too high last term; strategies used this term, however, are starting to show an improvement in behaviour around the school. The school is working proactively with external agencies, such as the child and adolescent mental health service and Wirral's anti-social behaviour team, to support students to manage their behaviour more positively. One student I met during my visit spoke extremely positively about the support he receives and demonstrated how he is better able to control his behaviour without resorting to insults or violence.

The current rate of attendance is 63%. Attendance remains too low and teachers recognise that the biggest barrier to improving the outcomes for students is their poor attendance and punctuality. Staff work tirelessly to encourage families to support their children to attend school and use the opportunities to learn and develop. The school has strengthened its attendance policy to reflect current practice and the school's focus on tackling poor attendance. The assistant headteacher has an analytical overview of the problems young people have in attending school. Consequently, she is responsive to students' fear of travelling through areas affected by gang culture and parents refusing to send students to the school. Examples include the school's work with other agencies, its flexibility to adapt off-site provision and its improved liaison with parents. The impact of the school's actions is evident in one student's attendance improving from 30% to 91% following three support plans instigated by the school.

Staff work effectively with other agencies to safeguard the students and robustly follow up any concerns until they are resolved.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The school has moved on apace since the interim headteacher joined the school last February. Although she is employed on a temporary basis, she has led with determination, good humour and used a coaching role to develop middle leaders to ensure that they share responsibility and are accountable for the school's development. One member of staff said that all staff are clearer and more confident about their roles due to the empowering leadership model.

The school has more stable staffing, improved teaching, better resources and signs of improving behaviour and attendance. The school is focused on improving students' achievement alongside further development in all areas to ensure improved outcomes for students. However, some of these improvements have been very recent and have yet to be fully embedded into the school. As a result, the

school needs more time to embed and evaluate its practices to ensure improvements are sustainable.

The school continues to plan for future developments and has worked positively with Sefton Education Trust to ensure that the transition to academy status is on track to convert in January 2015. The governors have continued to support the school during this process. Governors are working with school leaders to improve liaison with parents and improve attendance. For example, the Chair of the Governing Body recently met parents who were invited into the school to discuss their child's attendance. As a result, the governors have a better understanding of the problems families face in getting their children to school.

External support

EMAPS has developed good links with Orretts Meadow Special School for support with literacy and with Hugh Baird College regarding staff development. The school continues to make good use of their school improvement partner.

The local authority continues to support the school by providing specialist subject support to teachers and support with the transition to a sponsored academy. This has enabled the school to focus on improving the behaviour and attendance of students and improve teaching.

The local authority has completed its review of alternative provision in the area and shared the findings with schools. However, the future role of EMAPS lacks clarity. The increased number of referrals received since September means the school has to focus on a fast admission process to ensure that these students have access to educational provision. The local authority is aware of the demands this places on the school and is working with headteachers regarding the importance of the transfer of information between schools. The impact of this will enable students' progress and attainment to be tracked and evaluated to ensure that young people gain by using alternative provision in the area.