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## Nottingham schools make a comeback

The schools being turned around after “Inadequate” judgements last year are “making a strong recovery”, education bosses say.

Last December seven City schools and academies were judged to be failing their pupils by the Government education watchdog Ofsted. The schools rapidly drew up improvement plans to tackle the problems identified. The City Council intervened to give specialist support.

One year on and Ofsted has endorsed the progress being made in schools to get back on track.

### **Making strides in behaviour and attendance**

Two of the first improvements are better pupil behaviour and attendance. Twelve months ago all of the schools had attendance rates well below the national average. Today the figures have improved by up to 4% and are now more in line with attendance rates nationally.

Pupil behaviour has also improved with more students demonstrating a good attitude to learning. Education bosses put the improvements down to the consistent enforcement of attendance and behaviour policies.

Cllr Sam Webster, Executive Assistant for Schools at the City Council, said: “The improvements in school attendance are really quite remarkable. It is incredibly challenging to turn around poor attitudes to learning, to ensure more pupils are consistently at school and working hard.

“School leaders have to be congratulated for embracing new policies and approaches. They have consistently taken a zero tolerance stance to unauthorised school absence and poor behaviour such as swearing, wearing trainers and using mobile phones. Pupils are genuinely welcoming the difference this enforcement is making to their school environments. The vast majority of young people don’t want their lessons to be interrupted by disorderly peers.”

## **Still a long way to go**

Some schools have been making excellent improvements in GCSE attainment, particularly in English. But the progress is not yet happening consistently enough as the schools' exam results are still significantly below the national average.

Improved exam results rely heavily on better quality teaching. Ofsted have recognised that many schools have now recruited more experienced senior subject leaders. Lesson planning has been described by Ofsted as "meticulous" in some schools, teachers are setting stretching targets, expecting more from their pupils and providing better quality feedback to students through their marking. Ofsted are satisfied that interventions such as these are increasing the proportion of students making the progress expected of them.

Cllr Webster said: "There's no denying that GCSE results still have a long way to go. But, like Ofsted, we are encouraged by the prospect that improved attendance, behaviour and quality of teaching should translate into better GCSE results next summer.

"Our goal is for every Nottingham City child to be taught in a school judged to be good or better by Ofsted. We are not there yet, but schools are making a strong recovery, and ultimately a lot of Nottingham pupils are now getting a far better deal than they were 12 months ago."

- Ends -

## Big Wood School

Big Wood School is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures, according to a recent Ofsted inspection.

Teaching has improved, attendance is up, and fewer pupils are being excluded at the secondary school in Bestwood Park.

Senior leaders are also taking a more active and visible role in the way the school is being run, say inspectors following a monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 September.

The latest inspection in September found:

- The overall quality of teaching has improved, boosted by nearly a full complement of permanent staff (14 new teachers started at the school this academic year and all but two are permanent)
- The gap between the performance of disadvantaged students and others closed significantly in 2014
- The school has adopted a new marking policy with significant improvement in the frequency and quality of marking
- A new behaviour policy and a higher presence of senior leaders around the school have helped to bring a much greater consistency to the way that teachers and other staff deal with low-level disruption to learning
- The proportion of students who are excluded from the school is continuing to decline. This is a further indicator of improved standards of behaviour.
- The senior leadership team, strengthened by a reallocation of responsibilities, is beginning to establish effective strategies to check carefully on the work of the school.
- The attendance of students is now good, a further improvement on previous inspections and a reflection of some very concerted action on the part of leaders.

Overall attendance at the school for the first month of the Autumn term is up to 96.5% from 94% for the same time last year.

**Big Wood Head Teacher Andrea Healey said:** “We are delighted with the progress the school is making and that Ofsted recognise the changes we have been implementing are having a positive impact on the pupils of Big Wood School. The strong partnership the school has established with the Redhill Academy Trust, ahead of moving to academy status early in 2015 is helping to shape the future of Big Wood School and we are confident at our next full inspection the school will be judged at least “good.”

# Bluecoat Beechdale Academy

Parents and pupils are voting with their feet as the number of enrolments for Bluecoat Beechdale Academy has almost doubled since its launch on 1st April 2014.

As a newly established Academy, Bluecoat Beechdale is not categorised by Ofsted as Inadequate. The school is making substantial progress in a number of key areas.

Student achievement and progress:

- In summer 2014, 46% of students made expected progress in Maths, compared with 41% last year, while the number of students exceeding expected progress increased from 15% to 17%.
- The number of students making expected progress in English increased to 47%.

Quality of teaching:

- The Academy is on course to achieve its target of three-quarters of teaching being good or outstanding by autumn 2015.
- 40 additional hours of directed time after school have been earmarked for all teachers in 2014/15 to develop the quality of their teaching, in addition to 2 joint INSET days with Bluecoat Academy and 20 trained coaches who will continue to work with every teacher throughout 2014/15.
- In the Academy's first term, 122 fewer days were lost due to staff absence.
- By September 2014, the number of unqualified teachers had been reduced from 8 to 2, with a view to all staff being fully qualified by summer 2015.

Behaviour and safety of pupils:

- Attendance has moved from being significantly below average to above average, at 94.1% during the summer term and 95.7% during September 2014.
- Since the Academy launch fixed-term exclusions have been halved. Student engagement and behaviour has improved, with 10 positive points awarded for every 1 negative point, using the new Academy's behaviour system.
- There are over 20 enrichment opportunities available to students at break and lunchtimes and after the end of regular, timetabled lessons.

Leadership and management:

- The new Post-16 Vocational Education Centre opened in September 2014 and enrolled 80 new students.
- Two exceptional middle leaders started work as Directors of Learning in September 2014, along with a former Advanced Skills Teacher to oversee professional development across the academy. A new senior team was finalised in September, including a new Head of School in addition to 4 other seconded and newly recruited senior leaders. 17 new staff joined the Academy in September 2014, seconded from or recruited through Bluecoat Academy.

**Head of School, Derek Hobbs, said:** "We are delighted with the progress that has been made in the first 6 months of Bluecoat Beechdale Academy: applications have risen sharply, attendance has increased from significantly below average to be above average now, expectations have been established around uniform, behaviour and teaching and we anticipate improved exam results in summer 2015."

# Bulwell Academy

Bulwell Academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures, according to a recent Ofsted inspection.

The Ofsted report clearly demonstrates the significant progress the Academy has made and endorses the work currently underway.

The latest Ofsted monitoring inspection on the 7th & 8th October 2014 found:

Achievement of pupils at the school:

- The progress students are making in English is improving towards national expectations. The Academy's literacy strategy has had a significant impact on the progress of Year 7 and 8 students.
- Academy leaders have worked hard to improve the progress of those disadvantaged students who are eligible for pupil premium funding .... This represents a significant success for the academy in their aim to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students.

The quality of teaching:

- Rigorous quality assurance systems are ensuring that teaching continues to improve, and better teaching is leading to improved pupil behaviour.
- Most teachers plan their lessons meticulously, taking into account the individual needs of students and their prior attainment.
- The quality and consistency of marking and feedback of students' work has improved and is being appreciated by students.

Behaviour and safety of pupils:

- Work to improve the attendance and punctuality of students has been highly successful with attendance improving from 90% to 94.3% in one year.
- Behaviour policies are being applied consistently and students report that behaviour in lessons and around the school is much improved.
- The academy's strict policy on uniform means that students are nearly all smartly dressed and represent the academy well.

The Ofsted report states: "Senior leaders have already demonstrated a positive track record of successful leadership of the behaviour and safety of students and the pupil premium strategy. Student outcomes in these areas have improved rapidly; they now compare favourably with the national picture."

**Paul Halcro, Academy Principal, said:** "It's been an exciting year and Ofsted have acknowledged that Bulwell Academy is making the right progress. Our latest report gives me the confidence to know that the academy is rapidly improving. It is encouraging to have their backing for the improvements we have put in place since I joined the academy in 2012.

"Our new methods and approaches are paying dividends. This has only been possible due to the hard work of staff and students. We have a shared commitment and drive for improvement across the whole academy. But we are not complacent. We know we will continue to work hard to ensure that Bulwell Academy realises its vision of "Everyone Achieves".

## Djanogly City Academy (DCA)

The Torch Academy Gateway Trust began working as 'Education Partners' at Djanogly City Academy on 1st September. TAGT has introduced new a leadership team in all senior positions and recruited experienced subject leaders in Maths and English.

The new senior leadership team have experience of rapidly moving schools out of special measures and securing 'good' judgements under the new Ofsted framework. They have already begun to make deep and significant changes in the culture and operation of DCA. Students have responded well to these changes with dramatic improvements in punctuality and behaviour. A School Council has been introduced giving students the opportunity to become involved in the process of school improvement.

Staff are undertaking a demanding CPD programme focused on improving all aspects of teaching and classroom standards. Teachers are now more aware of their roles and responsibilities towards student progress.

Achievement of pupils at the school:

- Pupils have responded positively to improvements in teaching and learning
- A School Council has been introduced giving students the opportunity to become involved in the process of school improvement.
- Year 11 provision has been significantly overhauled to focus on student achievement.
- Data systems have been improved to ensure student progress is monitored accurately and used effectively.

The quality of teaching and leadership:

- New leadership in all senior positions
- New experienced strong leadership in Maths & English
- Senior Leadership have experience of moving schools from measures in a short space of time and securing good under the new Ofsted frameworks
- Staff engaging with demanding CPD programme
- Teachers are now more aware of their roles and responsibilities towards student progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils:

- There have been dramatic improvements in punctuality
- Behaviour has significantly improved during the autumn term
- Learning is more settled and focused
- Clear expectations have been communicated to pupils supported by a rigorous sanctions process

**Dave Hooker, Head of School said:** "Since we began working at DCA in September, we have been struck by the incredible energy, enthusiasm and potential of the students and parents here. With their support and the support of the local community we have begun to make significant changes to every aspect of DCA with a clear and unremitting focus on ensuring the very best achievement for every one of our students.

Whilst we recognise this will be a challenging journey, with the support of the Djanogly Learning Trust and the Torch Academy Gateway Trust, we are confident that DCA can become a school that provides its local community with the very best standards of education."

## Ellis Guilford School

Ellis Guilford School is making improvements in leadership, behaviour and attendance, according to a new Ofsted inspection.

Following the latest monitoring visit by Ofsted on 6 November, inspectors found:

- The quality of teaching is improving, especially in maths and science
- Achievement in English is a significant success. The proportion of students making expected progress is now in line with other students nationally
- Leaders' work to improve attendance and behaviour has secured considerable improvements
- Leaders have successfully challenged inadequate teaching, and continue to offer an appropriate balance of support and challenge to weaker teachers
- The school's current fixed-term exclusion rate is below the national average

Overall, it found that the school leaders' drive for improvement was reaping benefits across many aspects of the school's work.

Eighteen new teachers have been appointed, including two heads of department for English and social studies; a lead teacher in the science department and a lead for students with behavioural issues.

The report stated: "The Head Teacher and her senior team have the ambition, the skills and the drive to ensure that the school moves forward at pace. Their detailed analysis of all aspects of the school's work ensures that they have an accurate picture of current provision and a tightly focused plan for the next stage of improvement."

**Commenting on the report, Head Teacher Sally Coulton said:** "I'm pleased that Ofsted has recognised the hard work that is taking place at Ellis Guilford to move the school forward. We are absolutely committed to securing the best possible outcomes for our students and will continue to work with all members of our school community to bring about the improvements needed."

Other positive actions highlighted by Ofsted were:

- Leaders have established the 'Link', a new on-site specialist provision designed to support students who may be at risk of exclusion.
- A new house system has been set up, with students choosing the names of each house based on local sports teams.
- A new school uniform has also been adopted.

# Farnborough Academy

Farnborough Academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures, according to a recent Ofsted inspection.

Improvements have been made in pupil achievement, teaching and attendance. Inspectors say the school leadership and Governors are also working effectively to drive up standards.

The latest Ofsted monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 October found:

- The quality of teaching and marking is improving. Senior leaders are also ensuring greater consistency, while teachers are beginning to have higher expectations of what students can achieve
- There has been an increase in Year 11 students making progress in English and maths, while the proportion of students making more than expected progress in English has doubled
- Behaviour is improving and students value the pastoral care offered by heads of year and support staff
- Senior leaders place good emphasis on raising students' aspirations and promoting their employability skills. There is an impressive and expanding range of careers-related activities. The most effective activities are targeted well to students' individual needs
- Partnership arrangements with the Futures organisation broadens the range of city-wide learning activities open to students and members of staff
- The head teacher has risen to the numerous challenges he faces.

Nineteen teachers left the school at the end of the summer term. New members of staff include a Deputy Head Teacher with responsibility for student achievement, and Assistant Head Teachers with responsibility for English, maths and science.

The school is now operating as the Farnborough Academy under the sponsorship of the Trent Academies Group, which is led by Rushcliffe School and the Executive Head Teacher Phil Crompton.

The report states: "The support offered by Rushcliffe School has provided members of staff with experience, enthusiasm and expertise to help ensure that the life chances of the students of Farnborough Academy are improved."

**Farnborough Head Teacher Ben Chaloner said:** "The community has responded really well to the challenge of making the Farnborough Academy a place to be proud of. The Ofsted visit confirmed that we are going in the right direction."

## Nottingham University Samworth Academy (NUSA)

Nottingham University Samworth Academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures, according to their most recent Ofsted inspection in June 2014. Ofsted also identified the sponsor's statement of action as fit for purpose.

Ofsted were also happy for the academy to appoint NQTs because of the strength of leadership for induction and training, which includes support from the University of Nottingham.

Achievement of pupils at the school:

- In summer 2014, 40% of students at NUSA secured five good GCSEs including English and Maths, which represents an 8% increase from 2013.
- This figure is even more significant when the national average dropped by 7%. NUSA was particularly delighted by the English results, with 67% of students securing an A\*-C.
- In addition, NUSA has focussed on challenging the most able pupils to fulfil their potential, and this has resulted in an increase in A\*-A grades from 21 in 2013 to 122 in 2014.

The quality of teaching:

- The quality of teaching has significantly improved
- Significant staff recruitment over the summer has made a positive impact on teaching and learning
- An extensive and rigorous CPD programme has been introduced.
- Mentoring and support from the TAGT has added additional capacity

Behaviour and safety of pupils:

- This term NUSA has seen improvements in attendance and a significant reduction in exclusion rates.
- The academy is now focussing on reducing low-level disruption and ensuring that all students have positive attitudes to learning.
- The academy's student voice panels have confirmed a noticeable improvement in behaviour leading to a much more focussed learning environment.

**Head of School, Mark Watts, commented:** "We will continue to work hard to maximise the chances for our pupils approaching examinations over the next few years whilst also investing significant resources in building an educational environment that will deliver improved and sustainable achievement for all students.

"I am immensely proud of what our students, staff and parents have achieved so far, but I am also conscious that we have only taken the first steps on our journey towards building an academy that meets the aspirations of the sponsors and the local community."