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25 January 2019

Mrs Rachael Clifford  
Grange School  
Matthews Lane  
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Greater Manchester  
M12 4GR

Dear Mrs Clifford

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Grange School**

Following my visit to your school on 9 to 10 January 2019, 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 September 2017.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in September 2017.**

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress is accelerated by ensuring that:
  - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and that they provide pupils of different abilities with work that challenges them to make rapid progress from their different starting points
  - teachers carefully assess what pupils can do and they use this information to inform future teaching
  - the most able pupils are challenged to make consistently strong progress
  - teaching assistants focus their efforts on supporting pupils to make consistent gains in their learning
  - the teaching of reading and writing across the school is strengthened.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - leaders develop their monitoring and evaluation of the school's work to gain a deeper and more accurate view of the school's effectiveness
  - plans to improve the school are broad and ambitious and contain specific and measurable targets
  - evaluations of the quality of teaching are more accurate
  - the tracking of pupils' progress is improved, including careful tracking of groups such as disadvantaged pupils
  - leaders have appropriate plans in place for spending the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium and the PE and sport premium
  - plans for the new curriculum are more detailed to make sure that pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
  - governors have the skills and understanding needed to fulfil all of their statutory duties and to hold leaders to account for the quality of education being provided.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this specific 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 9 January 2019 to 10 January 2019**

### **Evidence**

I observed the school's work and scrutinised a wide range of documentation. I met with the executive headteacher, the acting headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of staff and some parents and carers. I also met with the chair and members of the interim executive board (IEB) and representatives of the local authority. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work and observed teaching in lessons with senior leaders. I met two groups of pupils formally as well as talking to pupils and staff informally around the school. I considered the written comments from 21 members of staff given to me during the inspection. I also examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding.

### **Context**

The school was put into special measures in September 2017. Since this inspection, the headteacher and the governing body have resigned. The local authority appointed an interim executive board that held its first meeting in March 2018. The local authority also enlisted support from a national leader of education (NLE) and a national support school (NSS). The national leader of education is currently the school's executive headteacher. The deputy headteacher of the NSS is currently the school's acting headteacher. Over time, a number of staff have left the school. Existing senior leaders have been allocated specific roles and responsibilities now and have job specifications which reflect these. The interim executive board has also appointed English and mathematics subject leaders. Also, several teachers have taken on responsibilities as subject leaders for other curriculum areas, including science and the humanities.

The school has been the subject of a directive academy order from the regional schools commissioner since November 2017. Although the local authority identified a potential sponsor soon after the order was issued, progress made towards academy status has been slow. In December 2018, an agreement was reached by all partners for the school to join the Prospere Learning Trust on 1 April 2018 as a sponsored academy.

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

The executive and acting headteachers' ambitious vision for Grange School is shared by the overwhelming majority of staff. Together, they have worked hard to implement the actions set out in the school's improvement plan. The headteachers have made sure that staff, including those on the senior leadership team, have clearly defined roles and responsibilities so that they know what is expected of them now. The headteachers have put together suitable teams to lead key aspects of the

school's work, for example safeguarding and attendance. They have prioritised training and support for leaders and staff so that they have the confidence and competence to do their jobs well.

Some staff embraced these changes straightaway, feeling that these were long overdue. Other staff have found the considerable changes, with an intense focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, harder to adapt to. However, the senior leadership team is working closely with staff from the NSS to provide staff at Grange with additional support above and beyond the internal training as required. Staff told the inspector that they find the opportunities to observe teaching, moderate pupils' work and receive help with planning very useful. A small minority of staff do not support the changes made by leaders.

The IEB is resolute in its commitment to making sure that the quality of education improves rapidly for pupils. It has deployed its experience, skills and expertise well. It has challenged and supported the leadership of the school in making the necessary improvements. Although many of these strategies are in their infancy, the rate of improvement has rapidly accelerated since the acting headteacher took up her post in September. The IEB has worked with the potential sponsor and the local authority to overcome the obstacles to the school becoming an academy.

Following the resignation of the governors after the last inspection, the local authority appointed the IEB. Consequently, an external review of governance was not required.

The IEB commissioned an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding. The findings from this review confirmed the findings of the inspection team. Leaders have now put in place appropriate plans, not only for the use of the pupil premium funding, but also the physical education (PE) and sport premium and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium. Lack of information about the performance of pupils eligible for this funding over time has meant that these plans are not sufficiently detailed. Leaders, including the IEB, are aware of these challenges and are updating plans as more information becomes available. For example, leaders have used information collected in the autumn term to compare the performance of different groups. This has helped them identify improving speaking and listening as a priority for the pupil premium spending.

The new headteachers have worked with the school's senior leaders and staff to put in place the basics that were missing at the time of the last inspection. With the support of the NLE and NSS, senior leaders are growing in confidence. These leaders have a better understanding of what needs to be in place if the school is going to provide an acceptable standard of education now. Consequently, the school's improvement plan provides for the implementation of required actions and specific intended outcomes by which leaders can measure their effectiveness over time. Leaders have been successful in making sure that the changes they have implemented so far have been adopted by all staff. Examples of these changes are

new timetables, lesson planning requirements and a revised assessment system. Although it is too early to come to definitive conclusions, there have been noticeable improvements in pupils' attitudes to learning, the amount of work they complete and rates of progress in English and mathematics.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders and teachers had no reliable means of finding out how well pupils were progressing. Leaders have introduced an assessment system which enables teachers to pinpoint pupils' levels of attainment accurately in line with the school's new mathematics and English curriculum. Leaders have ensured that teachers' judgements are accurate through rigorous quality assurance. Teachers are now making effective use of this information to help them plan lessons. Also, leaders use the information they have to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their classes now, including those pupils who are making the most progress. Consequently, they are making sure that teachers plan and deliver lessons which stretch and challenge these pupils further.

The increased capacity of senior leaders has enabled the appointment of subject leaders. Senior leaders are helping these middle leaders to design suitable curriculum plans for each subject. The well-considered plans drawn up by the recently appointed English and mathematics lead teachers have paved the way for their colleagues. There is a shared determination to make sure that the school's new curriculum is tailored to the needs, interests and aptitudes of pupils at Grange. At present, curriculum plans are in place only for English, mathematics and PE. Leaders have an ambitious timescale in place for the 'roll-out' of plans for each of the other subjects. It is anticipated that these will be fully in place for all subjects by the end of the academic year.

Leaders have made sure that they have an accurate view of the quality of teaching across the school. They make good use of this information to tailor training and support to meet the needs of teaching staff. They have sought further reassurance that their views of the school are accurate. Frequent quality assurance visits by external school improvement partners, commissioned by the NSS and the local authority, have provided the IEB, local authority and senior leaders with independent validation of the school's performance.

Leaders have made sure that staff are up to date with their safeguarding training. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities. The pupils, staff and parents who spoke to the inspector agreed that pupils are well cared for and safe. Older pupils told the inspector they had learned about how to keep themselves safe. Examples of this were the risks of drugs and alcohol and sharing personal information on line.

Leaders have taken urgent action to put in place risk assessments for all pupils in order to mitigate any potential risks. Moreover, leaders have followed up tenaciously a small number of health and safety issues. They have made sure that suitable contingency measures are in place while permanent solutions are agreed, for example with closer supervision of both pupils and vehicles in the busy 'drop-off'

area at the school entrance.

The school continues to be heavily reliant on the NSS and NLE to help it make the urgent improvements still required. Senior leaders are mindful of the challenges that lie ahead. Despite the considerable improvements that have been made, there is still much to do to ensure that pupils across the school receive a consistently good standard of education.

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

Since the last inspection, leaders have prioritised improvements to teaching and learning. The training and support they have put in place for staff have paid dividends. The quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics has improved across the school. Moreover, most of the teaching assistants are making a significant contribution to pupils' day-to-day learning now.

For the most part, staff have embraced wholeheartedly the 'back to basics' approach. All classes now follow agreed timetables, teachers use information about pupils' learning and the new curriculum plans to help design lessons, and class teams have given more careful thought to the classroom environment. Together with the improved subject knowledge of teachers in reading, writing and mathematics, these changes have helped to improve pupils' progress.

Leaders have overhauled the leadership of teaching and learning. They have implemented a system of performance management for both teachers and teaching assistants. This system recognises staff achievements as well as highlighting aspects requiring support. Staff told the inspector that they feel that they have reclaimed their professionalism. The school's ongoing training programme has reminded all staff what good teaching looks like. High levels of effective support for all teaching staff are helping them to improve their classroom practice continually. It is for this reason, along with improvements in pupils' behaviour, that I recommend that the school may now appoint newly qualified teachers.

Pupils' work seen during this inspection was marked in accordance with the school's assessment and feedback policy. A number of teachers use this information well. They consolidate pupils' learning, challenge their misconceptions and move them on to new learning as appropriate. Pupils generally take care with the presentation of their work and try hard to complete the work set.

In lessons other than English, mathematics and PE, there is inconsistency and variability in the quality of teaching. In those classes where teachers maintain the high expectations, have clearly defined learning objectives and plan well-judged tasks, pupils learn well across all subjects. However, in other classes where the quality of teaching is not as good, pupils' behaviour deteriorates, work is not challenging enough and pupils' progress is weaker in subjects such as the humanities.

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

Since the last inspection, leaders have established behaviour, attendance and safeguarding teams, each led by a member of the senior leadership team. These teams have developed suitable policies and procedures. They have a well-informed view of patterns and trends across the school. They use this information to pre-empt any emerging issues so that the number, severity and frequency of behaviour incidents has decreased, and pupils' attendance has improved. These teams work well with the school's family liaison officer, who steps in quickly to show families where they can get support and help if they need it.

Overall pupils' behaviour has improved since the last inspection. In the mornings, the school is calm and orderly. Pupils are generally in class, on task and responsive to adult instructions. After lunch, in those classes where teaching is stronger, pupils continue to demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, in those classes where there are weaknesses in teaching, the standards of behaviour decline and learning falters.

Leaders have taken effective action to improve attendance. More pupils are in school every day than at the time of the last inspection. The family liaison officer works closely with families and other agencies to help those families who are struggling to get their children to school.

At the time of the last inspection, there was insufficient time allocated to PE lessons. The recently appointed school sports leader has ensured that all pupils take part in two hours of physical activity each week. Also, he has made sure that the PE curriculum is tailored to the needs of the pupils at Grange. Moreover, he has devised lessons which engage pupils of all ages and encourage them to take part in sport. During the inspection, the inspector saw younger pupils enjoying a dance lesson and older pupils taking part in drills to increase their speed and agility.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Prior to last term, the school had no reliable or meaningful information about pupils' performance. A system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress is now in place. However, while leaders can be confident that they know what standard pupils are working at, they cannot be sure that their measures of progress over time are appropriate. The evidence leaders have from pupils' books, lesson observations and assessment checks in the autumn term confirm that pupils are making better progress in English and mathematics than at the time of the last inspection. However, the absence of curriculum plans and an assessment system for other subjects means that leaders and teachers are uncertain about what pupils know and can do.



## **External support**

The quality of support provided by the local authority has been essential to the school making improvements since the last inspection. The local authority established an interim executive board which challenges and supports leaders. It also arranged considerable support from the locally based NLE and NSS. These work regularly with the school, primarily to provide leadership support and training at all levels.

The local authority and IEB have reached an agreement in response to the directive academy order. They have agreed that the school will join the Prospere Learning Trust as a sponsored academy on 1 April 2019.