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Mrs Kyra Jones
Head of School
Newall Green High School
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Dear Mrs Jones

Special measures monitoring inspection of Newall Green High School

Following my visit with Osama Abdul Rahim, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 3–4 July 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2018. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

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

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers. However, as an exception to this, the Prospere Learning Trust may make up to two new appointments of newly qualified teachers to be deployed at the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Prospere Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children’s services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2018.

- Rapidly improve outcomes for all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or have SEN and/or disabilities, so that they make good progress from their starting points.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders monitor, assess and refine improvement plans regularly and rigorously, so that improvements are rapid and sustained
 - all leaders evaluate the impact of their actions on pupils' progress
 - leaders use the pupil premium funding so that disadvantaged pupils make the progress that they should
 - leaders manage additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities effectively, so that this group makes at least good progress
 - leaders manage the Year 7 catch-up funding effectively
 - senior leaders assess the quality of teaching in the school accurately so that they can precisely plan the improvements that are urgently required
 - the leadership of teaching, including subject leadership, is effective.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - insisting that all teachers have the highest expectations so that pupils achieve high standards
 - ensuring that pupils are routinely set work that closely matches their ability, so that they make the progress that they should.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - increasing the attendance of all pupils, especially that of disadvantaged pupils, so that it is at least in line with the national average
 - eliminating poor behaviour in lessons and around the school
 - reducing the number of disadvantaged pupils who are excluded from the school.
- Improve the quality of the 16 to 19 study programme by ensuring that all students:
 - attend school regularly
 - complete their study programme
 - achieve qualifications that enable them to progress to their next stage of education, employment or training.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 3 July 2019 to 4 July 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They held meetings with the head of school, the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, and a group of teachers. Inspectors met formally with three groups of pupils and had informal conversations with others in class, and at other times during the school's day. An inspector met with the chair of the school improvement board (SIB) and two other members of the SIB. One of these SIB members is also the chair of the Prospere Learning Trust, another is the trust's chief executive officer. A meeting was held with a consultant who provides school improvement advice to the school. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed samples of teaching and learning, mostly joined by senior leaders. An inspector conducted a scrutiny of pupils' books undertaken jointly with a senior leader. Other pupils' books were examined during observations of teaching and learning.

The only pupils attending school during this inspection were those in Years 7 to 9, together with a very small proportion of those in Year 10. The majority of Year 10 pupils were undertaking work experience and Year 11 pupils had left the school after completing their GCSE examinations.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, additional members of staff have been given temporary senior leadership responsibilities. These match important parts of the school's improvement plan.

A small number of staff will leave the school at the end of this school year. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed to start work at the school in September. The school roll has fallen and the number of pupils joining the school other than at the start of Year 7 and leaving the school at the end of Year 11 has increased.

There has been a large increase in the number of pupils with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Provision for pupils with SEND and/or behavioural needs in the school has been increased.

The school has engaged an external organisation to support and challenge pupils who have poor attendance, and their families.

The school day has been reorganised so that the day starts with form time and more time is available for learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders and trustees have ensured that the school has improved since the previous monitoring inspection. They continue to have a clear and honest understanding of the stronger and weaker aspects of the school. Leaders identified that improvement slowed somewhat in the spring term. In response, they acted to ensure that improvement speeded up again. For example, they increased their expectations about the standards of pupils' behaviour even further. Leaders have also adjusted the order of activities in the school day. This has successfully given a sharper start to the day and increased learning time a little without increasing the time pupils are required to be at school.

Leadership of the school's provision for pupils with SEND has strengthened considerably since the previous monitoring inspection. The behaviour and progress of pupils with SEND have improved. Leaders' plan to co-opt the headteacher of one of the trust's special schools to support this provision was extended from the spring term over the summer term. This work has meant that leaders now identify the needs of pupils with SEND far more securely. However, this has also meant that more pupils who would benefit from additional support with their learning, and who have not received this in a systematic way in the past, are now known. The proportion of pupils with SEND is much higher than seen in many schools. The school's work with pupils with SEND has meant that it has had to make more investment than planned in support services, for example in the use of educational psychologists to assess pupils' needs.

Leaders, working with colleagues in other schools in the trust, have provided training for teachers about how to make teaching effective. This has further increased the consistency of the activities that teachers use in their classrooms. However, some teachers do not ensure that what they do secures the best possible learning for pupils. Training for leaders about how they can be most effective has not been as strong a feature of the training provided this school year as that about teaching. Given the continuing changes to leadership roles, and the newness of some leaders, senior leaders intend that leadership training will be more prominent in the next school year.

The SIB is strongly holding senior leaders to account and driving the improvement in the school. Its members are knowledgeable and ask probing questions. If they feel that the school is not improving quickly enough, they are prepared to challenge leaders to ensure that improvement speeds up. For example, earlier this year they probed how well leaders were ensuring that pupils' behaviour was improving. This led to the improved systems for managing pupils' behaviour now in place. The information provided to the SIB by senior leaders provides members with detailed data about the school. However, sometimes this is made less useful because leaders have not explained the story arising from the data clearly enough. SIB members are now insisting that such explanations are more clearly set out.

The school improvement board and senior leaders have used the school improvement plan as an essential tool in organising the school's improvement. They carefully check that planned actions have been completed and that these have had the impact expected. While they intend to use a similar plan over the next school year, this has not yet been written. Until it is in place, it will be harder for leaders to be sure that the wide-ranging improvements still needed continue as quickly as possible.

The school is still receiving a high level of support internally within the trust. The executive headteacher has reduced the time he spends in the school somewhat. However, his involvement still makes a significant contribution to senior leadership. The trust is also supporting the school in other ways, for example by providing funding over and above that routinely allocated to the school to make redecoration of a shabbier part of the school building possible.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the first monitoring inspection. Leaders' evaluations identify strong gains in the quality of the teaching that pupils experience. The programme of training for teachers about effective teaching has made a strong contribution to this improvement. However, despite strength in some subjects, including mathematics, the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress still remains inconsistent across the school. Some teachers concentrate more on the activities being taught than on how these will help pupils to learn as effectively as possible.

Teachers' planning helps them to extend pupils' knowledge. However, teachers focus less on developing how pupils apply this knowledge and develop their reasoning skills. This means that pupils' deeper learning is sometimes limited.

Teachers' strong subject knowledge gives pupils confidence. Teachers use their knowledge to shape their questioning of pupils. Teachers frequently ensure that different pupils have a chance to share their ideas with others in the class. However, pupils are sometimes given little time to think about what they are going to contribute before answers are expected. This makes it harder for pupils to weigh up their ideas and sometimes limits how their responses develop their oral skills.

Teachers have raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour and this has contributed to pupils' better attitudes towards their learning. However, teachers' expectations about how well pupils should be achieving sometimes remain too low. Some teachers use their assessment of pupils' learning to match the learning they plan to pupils' existing knowledge and skills. However, this good practice is inconsistent. In some lessons, work is too easy for the most able pupils and too hard for the least able. In addition, teachers seldom reshape learning as it develops, even when this would add to pupils' progress. Some teachers do not insist that

pupils complete the work set. These gaps in pupils' work make it harder for pupils to build up their learning in a systematic way.

The contribution of teaching assistants to pupils' learning is still underdeveloped. A few teaching assistants have received training to help them work most effectively. Leaders intend that all teaching assistants should receive this training. However, the programme for this is not firmly in place.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour has shown some improvement since the first monitoring inspection. Inspectors saw far fewer instances of poor attitudes to learning and disruptive behaviour in class than during that inspection. However, the school's own records show that behaviour is still not good enough. The number of recorded instances of poor behaviour each day has remained at a similarly high number and the proportion of students receiving fixed-term exclusions has risen compared to the last school year, including for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders introduced a firm policy that, from the start of this term, pupils' mobile phones are to be switched off and put away at all times while they are in school. Leaders held a series of assemblies to explain why this approach was needed. Since then, staff and pupils report that there are fewer instances of pupils misusing their phones to be unkind to each other. In addition, lesson time is no longer wasted sorting out issues linked to the use of mobile phones.

Pupils' attendance, including that for disadvantaged pupils, fell in the early part of this school year compared to the previous year. In response, leaders introduced a range of strategies to encourage regular attendance including using assemblies to stress the importance of regular attendance. Leaders have contracted support from an external company to provide better help and more effective challenge for pupils with poor attendance and their families. The challenge to families of pupils with very poor attendance includes the use of fixed penalties and fines. This strengthened strategy has seen some success with some pupils. The proportion of pupils with good attendance has increased. However, overall, the absence of too many pupils is still too high. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains below that of other pupils. Leaders' own analysis of pupils' achievement has shown clear links between the level of pupils' attendance and their academic success.

Leaders have also sharpened the school's approach to addressing lateness to school and lessons. Teachers now record any lateness to class in a more systematic way. This systematic approach also extends to pupils automatically receiving same-day detentions for being late. Pupils' punctuality is improving. The numbers of sanctions issued for lateness has had increases from time to time and then reduced again. This reflects leaders' gradual reduction of the leeway granted before pupils are confirmed as late.

Outcomes for pupils

The school's own data indicates that pupils' attainment is rising. Year 11 pupils' achievement in the period before they took their GCSE examinations was higher than in the previous year. Similarly, Year 10 pupils are doing better than Year 11 did at the end of their Year 10. Leaders are cautious in their estimates of Year 11 pupils' likely GCSE performance but expect that there will be, at least, some increase in pupils' progress compared to last year, including for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders have introduced a new approach to judging pupils' attainment by matching this to data from other schools across England. They are using a commercially available system that uses the same tests in English and mathematics in different schools. They have completed two rounds of this testing so far. The results from these indicate that pupils in some classes have made clear gains in their English and mathematics learning. Teachers are also using information from assessment to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. This allows them to provide targeted teaching to close these gaps.

The school is increasing its expectations of pupils' attainment by consistently setting academic targets for Years 7 and 8 based on the top fifth of pupils in similar schools. They intend to roll this system forward into next year's Year 9, and then into Years 10 and 11 in subsequent years. In the past, some pupils in some subjects have had targets set against the standards typically reached by the top half of pupils only.

The pupils' work books seen by inspectors indicate that there is inconsistency in current pupils' progress. Their progress depends far too much on which subject they are studying. Inspectors saw examples of clear learning, for example in Year 9 pupils' English books, where higher-attaining pupils moved from successfully completing simple to more demanding tasks over this school year. However, in other subjects, and for other pupils, progress is too often hindered by gaps in their work and learning. For example, in Year 8 science, some pupils' weaker learning means that they are roughly six weeks behind others in covering the school's expected curriculum content.

The progress of pupils with SEND has increased as a result of leaders' better systems for identifying and responding to their learning needs. However, still more could be done to strengthen the academic success of these pupils. For example, the deployment of, and support provided by, teaching assistants are not consistently having an impact on pupils' learning as well as their welfare.

Leaders are ensuring that the wider learning of pupils, and in particular of disadvantaged pupils, is being extended so that they have a greater understanding of the opportunities that today's society gives them. An example of this is in the recent series of visits of groups of Year 7 pupils to Manchester to see the John

Rylands library and to allow them to buy books for them to read and share. This project has been funded through a partnership with local businesses.

External support

The formal support from external partners described in the first monitoring inspection report has now ended.

The local authority has recently agreed that the school's admission number should be temporarily reduced. In part, this change is intended to support the school in the challenges of managing the high number of admissions of pupils it receives other than at the start of Year 7.