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Mrs Kyra Jones
Head of School
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Dear Mrs Jones

Special measures monitoring inspection of Newall Green High School

Following my visit with Dawn Farrent, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 19–20 November 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 third 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 (PLT) may appoint no more than four newly qualified teachers in total to be deployed at the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the PLT, 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.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in

order to ascertain how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 19 November 2019 to 20 November 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They held meetings with the head of school, the executive principal, other senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of teachers. Inspectors met formally with two groups of pupils and had informal conversations with others in class and at other times during the school's day. An inspector met the chair and the chief executive officer of the PLT. These trust representatives are also members of the school's improvement board. 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 visited lessons, mostly joined by senior leaders. An inspector conducted a scrutiny of pupils' books undertaken jointly with a senior leader.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has fallen. More pupils in Year 11 left the school at the end of last school year than joined the school in Year 7 at the start of this school year.

Three teachers have left the school. A deputy headteacher and three other teachers have joined the school. A small number of teachers have long-term absence from school.

The number of pupils with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receiving support identified through an education, health and care plan has increased.

The role of the executive principal has further reduced.

Leadership has been strengthened by the appointment of senior and middle leaders with additional temporary responsibilities. These responsibilities correspond to important tasks needed at this stage of the school's improvement.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders have ensured that the school's curriculum allows pupils to build up the knowledge they need about the subjects they study. Inspectors saw this in the way learning is organised in Year 11 geography, history and science. In each of these subjects, teachers use a scheme of work that indicates what pupils should learn in each lesson and how this leads to the next. This systematic approach is giving Year 11 pupils confidence that they will do as well as they can in their GCSE examinations at the end of this year. This approach also helps teachers to ensure that the activities they provide for pupils in class are challenging.

The school has continued to become better at identifying the needs of pupils with SEND. Teaching assistants have received training so that they can help the pupils they work with to fully take part in learning.

The achievement of Year 11 pupils in 2019 was still not good enough. However, unconfirmed information about Year 11 pupils' progress indicates that this was stronger than in the previous year. However, it also shows that, on average, pupils gained about one grade lower than similar pupils in other schools in each of their GCSEs. There was also some improvement in pupils' attainment. For example, higher proportions of Year 11 pupils gained standard and strong passes in both English and mathematics. The stronger practice in the school means that pupils currently in the school, including those in Year 11, are learning more effectively.

Leaders and teachers have further emphasised the importance of reading for pleasure and as part of learning. Teachers now expect pupils to read for part of every lesson. Often, this reading is directly linked to the material pupils are studying but, sometimes, teachers provide time for pupils to pursue other reading. In addition, from the start of this school year, all pupils have a weekly lesson that concentrates on their oral skills. This part of the curriculum is still in a relatively early stage of its development, so it is too early to see what its impact has been. Teachers use some of these oracy lessons to boost the reading skills of older pupils who still find it hard to read well.

Leaders have changed their approach to organising the curriculum. From this year, pupils will start their GCSE courses in Year 10. This is to allow them to experience a wider range of subjects for longer and to have a firmer foundation for later study. In addition, leaders have embarked on a review of the curriculum and how it is taught. This well-planned programme has already involved teachers observing the work of their colleagues and considering what approaches work well. Leaders have identified some subjects where Year 11 pupils achieved less well in 2019. Leaders recently completed detailed reviews of how the curriculum offered links to how well pupils learn in these subjects. The findings of these reviews are already being used to help middle leaders improve the curriculum in their subjects.

Staff have now embedded their higher expectations about pupils' behaviour. Pupils now know and normally accept school rules in a positive way. For example, if pupils are seen with a mobile phone by a member of staff, pupils quickly follow the instructions they are given to put the phone away and do so without fuss. Inspectors saw pupils behaving well and trying hard in most lessons they visited. In some classes, and in particular when the curriculum is not interesting or challenging enough, some pupils show less-positive attitudes to their learning.

Incidents of more serious misbehaviour in school are reducing. The number of exclusions has continued to fall, particularly for pupils with SEND.

Attendance is a little lower compared with the same stage of the last school year.

Leaders have carefully analysed patterns in, and the reasons for, pupils' absence. Many pupils continue to attend well. However, there is a group of pupils whose attendance remains very low. Sometimes, the reasons for these pupils' poor attendance arise from situations outside of the school's direct control. The school's records of pupils' punctuality appear to show that this has got worse. However, the opposite is true. The school's expectations have been increased. Pupils are now recorded as late one minute after registers close so there is much less significant lateness from pupils.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have ensured that improvement has continued. They have a detailed understanding of what they have already achieved and what they still need to do. They know the circumstances and needs of pupils, for example in their close analysis of pupils' attendance. Leaders have improved the way that they inform trustees and members of the school improvement board about the school. In addition, leaders arranged for part of the school building to be redecorated. That area of the school is now a more attractive place for learning.

Leaders revised the school's improvement plan for this school year. This allowed them to take account of improvement already achieved and to pay greater attention to the curriculum and how that should be developed. The actions included in the plan remain suitable to ensure that improvement continues. Senior leaders have identified the leaders responsible for making sure that important improvements happen. They have used the new roles within the school's leadership to increase the team of people with such responsibility. Leaders intend to extend the plan further as actions are completed, for example by including actions intended to ensure that the careers education offered by the school fully matches the Gatsby benchmarks.

Leaders have continued to provide training for staff that matches the school's context and improvement priorities. For example, it has included work on the challenges that pupils may face from their earlier experiences. Some of this training is provided jointly with other schools in the PLT. Staff from the school support the learning of their colleagues from other schools in the trust, as well as learning themselves.

Despite leaders' demanding expectations about how members of staff will contribute to the schools' improvement, staff who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the changes in the school. They said that staff morale is high. Leaders have sought ways to make sure that teachers and other members of staff do not spend time and effort on tasks that bring little benefit. For example, they have reduced the number of times the data from testing pupils is collected over the school year. Teachers judge that this now leaves them with more time to concentrate on helping pupils to learn.

Leaders have ensured that the safeguarding of pupils remains a very high priority.

The systems to make sure that pupils are safe and secure continue to work well.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have continued to develop the wider opportunities that the school offers to pupils. These opportunities often involve local businesses.
- Leaders have continued their careful focus on the urgent priorities identified at the previous inspection. However, they have now started to widen their view and to identify and enhance aspects of the school that were already working well.
- Leaders are seeking ways for pupils to be more involved in their school. Leaders intend to find out more about what pupils think of the school. Staff have just introduced a prefect system and they intend that a pupil council will soon be re-established.
- The reducing role of the executive principal in supporting other leaders has allowed leaders within the school to become increasingly more confident and self-reliant.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Despite the improvement in the school and the increasing number of things that pupils can be proud of, some pupils lack pride in what the school offers them and is achieving.

External support

Most of the support the school receives is provided internally within the PLT.

Until very recently, the local authority had not been able to provide additional support to the school in identifying and meeting the needs of the significant number of pupils with complex social and learning needs. A programme to do this has just started.