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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 Philip Wood, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 December 2018, 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 March 2018.

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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose

the school's Ofsted action plan is fit for purpose.

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 appoint up to two newly qualified teachers to be deployed to teach English and science at the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, 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.

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 first monitoring inspection on 18 to 19 December 2018

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 middle leaders. 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. Meetings were held with representatives of the Prospere Learning Trust and a consultant who provides school improvement advice to the school. An inspector met with the chair of the school improvement board (SIB). An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed samples of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and some other subjects, mostly joined by senior leaders. Inspectors conducted a scrutiny of pupils' books, undertaken jointly with senior leaders. The documents examined by inspectors included the trust's statement of action and the school's Ofsted action plan.

Context

The programme of changes to staffing started shortly before the previous inspection was concluded. There are now fewer teachers and other members of staff. The responsibilities of senior leaders have been reallocated. In addition, staff who are not teachers have been appointed to become pastoral leaders.

The sixth form closed at the start of this school year. From January, part of the vacated sixth-form building will be used to house the sixth form of one of the special schools in the trust.

The school's local governing body was replaced by an SIB, with the intention of providing sharply focused direction to the school's implementation of the school's Ofsted action plan.

The curriculum has been extended to provide more emphasis on pupils' basic skills, such as their oracy, and to give more opportunities for pupils to participate in a wider range of different activities planned to broaden their experience.

The school has received significant support from other schools within the trust.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Different groups with responsibility for strategic leadership, including trustees, members of the SIB and senior leaders, demonstrate clear commitment to resolving the school's weaknesses. Those involved have carefully planned the actions they need to take. They are honest about the school's failings in the past and realistic in accepting that the significant improvement needed will take time to achieve.

However, the school's improvement so far, even though it is at a very early stage, demonstrates that leaders also understand the urgency needed to provide pupils with a suitable education.

The trust's statement of action and the school's Ofsted action plan were reviewed by Ofsted soon after these were written. The statement of action was judged fit for purpose at that stage. However, the plan lacked sufficient detail to allow leaders to most easily check that their actions would have the impact expected. Leaders have added additional details into the plan. These changes have made the plan appropriately clear and challenging. In addition, senior leaders, including trustees and members of the SIB, have started to put the plan into action and to complete their checks that it is working. They have already finished their first, termly, evaluation of progress. This confirmed that the school is properly following the plan and that improvement has started. The overall school plan informs, and is linked to, subject area plans. These have been prepared by middle leaders. Middle leaders are held to account by senior leaders for their success in following their plans. Both senior and middle leaders have started to use strategic planning effectively. This is already leading to faster rates of improvement, for example, to teaching and learning and some aspects of pupils' outcomes.

Senior leaders have identified that the leadership of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) remains ineffective. Such pupils are over-represented in those who receive sanctions for poor behaviour, including exclusion, have poor attendance or who attend alternative provision. Indicators such as these show that the school continues to fail to properly meet these pupils' needs or to use the available funding as well as it should. The trust has arranged for the leadership of SEND to be strengthened by the full-time secondment of the headteacher of one of the trust's special schools to Newall Green High School for the spring term.

The previous inspection identified that an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken. This was completed. Overall responsibility for the use of this funding has been changed as part of the changes to senior leadership. The school has produced a detailed plan which sets out how the funding will be used. This plan pays proper attention to the urgent issues of improving the achievement, behaviour and attendance of disadvantaged pupils, overall and compared to other pupils. It remains evident that the school's previous use of the additional funding to help disadvantaged pupils, and other funding to help key stage 3 pupils who were behind others in English and mathematics to catch up, was ineffective. It is too soon to see clear impact of the school's new approaches in these areas.

The previous inspection also recommended that the school should undertake an external review of governance. Trustees decided that this would not be of value because they determined that the local governing body should be replaced by a smaller SIB. The central task of the SIB is to ensure that the school follows its

Ofsted action plan. The SIB is a small group of suitably experienced people, many of whom are also trustees. This means that trustees are directly involved in governance. However, it presents a potential risk should the trust need to independently challenge the SIB. Records of the work of the trust and SIB, together with discussion with trustees, SIB members and senior leaders, indicate that governance in the school is suitably challenging.

In partnership with colleagues from other trust schools, leaders have improved the school's leadership of teaching and learning. They have provided training for all teachers and, where needed, specific additional training to boost the skills of individuals. The school's system for managing teachers' performance now includes individual targets for teachers about the effectiveness of their classroom work. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. With the support of consultants from outside the school, they have established a programme to check on the quality of teaching at regular intervals over the school year. Their findings confirm that teaching has started to improve.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

While leaders have successfully started to improve teaching, there is still significant variation in its quality and impact. Teachers' expectations have increased, although some are less effective at making sure that their classroom practice matches these higher expectations.

Leaders have identified that pupils' weak skills in reading, writing and spoken English often restrict their learning in many subjects. Leaders now ensure that developing these skills is strongly emphasised by teachers. For example, inspectors saw mathematics teachers paying particular attention to the meaning and spelling of important specialist words. The school is innovative in its development of pupils' oral skills. This work has included training for teachers. Many are now skilled at using questioning to give pupils confidence to talk in class and so build their understanding.

The school has developed a common approach to how learning in lessons should be organised. This means that pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers have improved the way they make sure that learning is suitably challenging. They carefully use questions with a range of difficulty early on in learning particular topics to find out what pupils already know and to make sure that the next stages match pupils' ability. Pupils like this approach and say that it helps them to learn well.

Senior leaders have considered, in detail, whether the school's assessment systems are accurate. They work with colleagues across the trust to check that the standard of assessment in English and mathematics across different schools is the same. In addition, teaching approaches and, whenever suitable, the courses offered are common. Approaches like these gives leaders confidence that assessment is accurate. In addition, the standards of marking in a number of subjects at key stage

4 are strong because teachers are also markers for GCSE examination boards. At key stage 3, leaders have introduced online tests. These are provided by a national company which means that pupils' achievement is compared to a wide range of other pupils. At the same time, the use of online testing contributes to the way leaders manage teachers' workload.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour remains not good enough. Pupils told inspectors that learning is spoiled in far fewer lessons by pupils' poor behaviour and attitudes than at the time of the previous inspection. However, senior leaders said that this is still happening too frequently. Poor behaviour was seen by inspectors in visits to some classes. The attendance of some pupils has improved but overall attendance is lower than at the same stage of the previous school year.

There is a strong link between how well teaching interests and motivates pupils and how well they behave. Where teaching challenges pupils and teachers confidently use the school's agreed approaches to providing high-quality teaching, pupils concentrate, try hard, participate well and support each other. There are still too many occasions when this does not happen, with pupils' poor conduct slowing everyone's learning.

Pupils are respectful towards each other. They accept and value their differences. The pupils who spoke to inspectors said that there is little bullying and that any problems are quickly dealt with by staff. Sometimes, pupils are slow in moving between classes and then become boisterous. Some pupils lack determination to make the most of every minute of the school day.

Leaders keep careful records of instances of poor behaviour and sanctions such as fixed-term exclusions. These show that the behaviour of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND continues to be less good than that of other pupils.

Pupils' attendance is not good enough. Those pupils who already attended well or moderately well have, in general, improved their attendance this school year. However, other pupils' attendance has, typically, fallen somewhat. Too many pupils have long-term absence. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance remains lower than that of other pupils. Leaders have sharpened their focus on challenging pupils' poor attendance. This is one aspect where leaders are introducing tried and tested approaches successfully used in other schools in similar circumstances. These approaches are still at a relatively early stage.

Outcomes for pupils

The overall progress of Year 11 pupils who completed their GCSE examinations at the end of last school year, including those who are disadvantaged, was even weaker than the year before. Even allowing for the relatively short time between

the previous inspection and the end of Year 11 courses, such a decline represents a further concern about the school's past performance.

Leaders have established a system to assess pupils regularly and use information from this to let staff understand whether pupils are learning well enough. This system also provides a wealth of data about different groups of pupils and their success. Leaders analyse this data in careful detail. Patterns in pupils' achievement are identified and shared with other staff and members of the SIB. However, this reporting sometimes does not identify the reasons for, or stories behind, strengths and weakness as clearly as possible. This makes it harder for those involved to understand which steps are most important to bring about improvement. In addition, leaders' analysis sometimes lacks comparison to national averages or fails to give enough emphasis to pupils' progress, rather than their attainment.

Leaders set targets for pupils linked to a set of data about schools nationally. In the subjects where pupils have the highest achievement, targets are matched to the top fifth of schools. For many pupils, these targets are matched to how well pupils do in the top half of all schools. Leaders have adopted this approach because they judge it will make targets realistic. However, it means that some pupils have targets which they can relatively easily achieve.

Current pupils' achievement, including that of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, remains too low. However, the school's most recent assessments indicate some improvement. For example, the scores gained by Year 11 pupils in the first part of this school year compared to those gained by Year 11 in a similar period last school year show improvement in a range of subjects, such as geography, mathematics and science. In addition, across the school and in different subjects, there are indications that many pupils did better in their first assessment this year than their final assessment last year.

External support

Most of the support that the school is receiving is provided from within the trust. However, the school is also part of a project funded by the Department for Education aimed at transforming schools in challenging circumstances. This project has involved the school working with a group of schools led by a local effective school. It has had particular impact in helping leaders to redesign the school's systems to encourage pupils to attend regularly. In addition, the school's work on oracy has been supported by links with two schools which are part of local teaching school partnerships.