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27 September 2013

Mr Alan Braven
Acting Headteacher
Buglawton Hall School
Buxton Road
Congleton
Cheshire
CW12 3PQ

Dear Mr Braven

Special measures monitoring inspection of Buglawton Hall School

Following my visit with Karen Forster, Social Care Team Manager, to your school on 26 September 2013, 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 and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which 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:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint up to one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body of the Federation of Manchester BESD Schools and the Strategic Director Children's Services for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is always at least good in order to raise pupils' attainment, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use ICT to enhance their learning and their skills
 - improving pupils' understanding of what they read so that they can learn more independently
 - making best use of all opportunities to foster pupils' literacy and speaking skills
 - ensuring that the school's best practice in marking is implemented across all subjects.

- Improve pupils' behaviour and safety, by:
 - taking rigorous steps to deal with any incidents of bullying
 - raising levels of attendance
 - increasing the opportunities for the school council to take on responsibilities.

- Improve leadership, management and governance, by:
 - establishing a climate in which all staff feel confident to share concerns about the effectiveness of steps taken to keep pupils safe
 - ensuring that the implementation of policies and procedures is monitored regularly and any inconsistencies are dealt with promptly
 - developing the skills of inexperienced leaders so that they can make a full contribution to the leadership of the school.

- The Federation, local authority and Department for Education must, as a matter of urgency, complete the arrangements under way to ensure that the school has a formal governing body so that detailed support and challenge can be provided to school leaders and the views of parents, staff and the community can be represented.

- The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:
 - The school makes reasonable efforts to obtain all necessary information about a child's health, education and care needs, prior attainment and achievements prior to (or in an emergency, at the time of) admission:(NMS 2.4)
 - Arrangements are in place to review how the child is settling following admission to the school. In an emergency admission a review meeting is initiated as soon as possible (and never longer than four school weeks after admission) to consider whether the child should remain at the school, or whether it is in that child's interests to move to a different placement. Such a review meeting may involve (where appropriate) the school, the placing authority, the parents/carers or those with parental responsibility, those with significant involvement with the child (such as social services or health services) and, where possible, the child: (NMS 2.5)

- Children develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills through the accessible and stimulating environment created by the school. Children are supported to take part in school-based and out-of school -activities: (NMS 10.1)
 - The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint is to be used; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions: (NMS 12.1)
 - Methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially challenging behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid use of physical restraint. Restraint is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person (including the child who is being restrained) or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person (including the child who is being restrained): (NMS 12.4)
 - All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by: (NMS 12.5)
 - A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention. Records may include the information in Appendix 2 (Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards) - 'use of physical restraint'. The record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of physical intervention restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice: (NMS 12.6)
 - There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff. The school's governing body or proprietor has a system to monitor care and welfare provision in the school: (NMS 13.1)
 - The school's procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the Head of Care follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority: (NMS 15.7)
 - The learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and is updated if necessary: (NMS 19.4)
- Ensure that all pupils have opportunities to develop daily living skills appropriate to their age.
 - Ensure that the whole-school policy for managing behaviour complies with the relevant Department for Education guidance, particularly in relation to the policy statement on internal exclusions.
 - Ensure that the professional supervision of care staff routinely includes a review of their progress and identifies further training needs.

Report on the second monitoring inspection of 26 September 2013.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including boarding arrangements in the evening, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, the school council, senior leaders, groups of teaching and care staff, the Chair of the Buglawton Hall Committee of the Governing Body of the Federation of Manchester BESD Schools and a representative from the local authority.

Context

In June 2013, the headteacher of the day schools from the Federation of Manchester BESD Schools was appointed acting headteacher of the school, nominally present on site for two days each week. At other times, responsibility for the operational leadership of the school is shared between two acting assistant headteachers. Five care staff have left the school since the previous monitoring inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

It is too early to see measurable impact on students' attainment and progress since the new leadership arrangements have been in place. However, students have made a good start to the new school year. The school was calm, students appeared settled and purposeful learning was taking place in the lessons observed. Students' work in books was well presented with a clear emphasis on practising the basic skills of literacy and numeracy across all the subjects of the curriculum. Progress meetings between leaders, teachers and students are scheduled to begin soon, so that the students have clearer ideas of what they are aiming to achieve in each subject.

Levels of attainment are generally, although not exclusively, lower than those expected for boys of comparable ages. For some students, entry levels are very low indeed. More accurate assessment now clearly identifies that there remains considerable variation in the ability of different year groups. The attainment potential of Years 10, 8 and 7 has been assessed as significantly greater than other years and hence expectations of these groups are higher.

The quality of teaching

Although the quality of teaching was not one of the aspects of the school that led to its placement in special measures in February 2013, it was judged as requiring improvement. It has, therefore, been a focus of improvement for the school. Evaluations by external consultants indicate significant progress is being made in raising the quality of teaching. Indeed, 80% of teaching was judged good or better in the most recent evaluation. While the three lessons observed during the monitoring inspection did not quite support such a positive view of teaching, all lessons had good features, including clear, shared objectives for lessons, content that engaged students, a genuine attempt to make learning relevant for them and good support for learning by teaching assistants. Marking was thorough and encouraging, although it rarely indicated the next steps for students' learning. Expectations of students are rising. This was seen in the quality of work in their exercise books in

science and art, for example. Nevertheless, more should be expected of students – at present, too much of their work is through the completion of worksheets, requiring little from them by way of extended responses that demonstrate their understanding. Also, students are insufficiently involved in evaluating what they have learned in a lesson and how they might improve further.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of students is improving. Attendance this term is 10 percentage points higher than last year. Incidents of bullying and the need for staff to intervene physically with students are dramatically reduced from previous levels. During the monitoring inspection, the school ethos was calm and well ordered. Staff said this is now normal. Nearly all students observed had good attitudes to learning. They showed pride in their work and in their contribution to the school, because they were listened to and involved more. There is an even greater emphasis on rewards for positive behaviour. Senior staff are more visible around the school during lessons, checking that they are proceeding smoothly and intervening early where required. There are fewer instances of students leaving lessons and, when they do, there are clearly understood procedures for what happens next. A new support room has been set up where students continue with their work, under supervision, until such a time as they are ready to return to class. The inappropriate management of challenging behaviour through regular 'internal exclusion' that required frequent use of physical intervention and restraint is now a thing of the past. There has been a significant improvement in cooperation between teaching staff and care staff. The regular exchange of information between education and care staff is enhancing both the learning and the well-being of students. As a consequence, students feel safer with higher levels of trust that staff will deal effectively with their concerns.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new leadership arrangements are working well. The acting headteacher has rapidly won the confidence and trust of staff and students through authoritative, clear strategic leadership and management of the school. Equally, the acting assistant headteachers are providing increasingly effective operational leadership, by providing leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning, behaviour and safety. They are well known to students and carry the full support of teaching and care staff. Communications are much improved; for example, at handover times at the beginning and end of the school day. The impact of the new arrangements is a huge improvement in the morale of staff and in the consistency of practice. Staff are aware that there is much more to do to embed and secure the improvements and to make the school good. However, they have a growing confidence in their capacity to do so without further external support, building on their own ideas. For example, staff want to make better use of the opportunities provided by the site and its rural location within the curriculum.

Governance is also improving to provide greater accountability. The strategic committee with delegated responsibility for the school meets monthly to check on progress before reporting to the full Federation Governing Body. Members of the committee visit the school regularly, to the extent that students know of their work.

Membership of the committee is being broadened with the appointment of community governors. There has been no success to date in attracting parent governors to the committee but some progress has been made in this respect within the full Federation Governing Body.

Many of the concerns raised in the s5 inspection of February 2013 concerned the school's inability to ensure the safety of students. The outcomes for residential students in the integrated inspection were judged inadequate on this basis.

Ten failures to meet National Minimum Standards¹ are listed in the report. The school produced an action plan to address the shortfalls in National Minimum Standards and its progress in meeting the shortfalls in these Standards was monitored at this inspection. Considerable progress has been made in resolving issues in seven of these standards with impact yet to be evident in the remaining three. The school has rewritten pre-admission procedures for new resident students and developed the evening activity programme. The school now maintains and consistently implements a clear Care and Control Policy, which has been ratified by the school's governing committee. This means that all staff understand the content of the policy and are trained in authorised models of physical intervention. The number of restraints with students has greatly reduced and students report that incidents of restraint are justified.

The school now consistently includes and records post-incident discussion sessions with relevant staff and young people following an episode of restraint. This enables staff to reflect and learn from each intervention and informs a new detailed analysis process for mapping trends or issues. The school has introduced a new detailed quality monitoring system, where an independent visitor assesses the quality of boarding. Together with the increased presence of members of the school's governing committee, the number of independent people that the students can speak to with their comments and concerns has increased.

The school's missing student procedures are now compatible with the local authority's Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures. The three remaining areas for development are: the consistent recording of restraints; the provision of a post-admission review for newly admitted resident students; and, the annual effectiveness review of the learning and development programme for care staff.

The school's attention to all of the National Minimum Standards and the impact on outcomes for resident students will be measured at their forthcoming full boarding inspection.

¹ Residential Special School National Minimum Standards, Department For Education, 1 November 2012.

External support

The local authority is playing a decisive and influential role in the school's improvement. It has supported the Federation in making difficult staffing decisions. It provides oversight of improvement through the work of its officers and has brokered effective and timely support in all the priority areas for improvement, particularly for safeguarding and for teaching and learning. The phase for brokered support is now ended and the school is now building on what it has learned over the past two terms, confident in its resources and of those within the wider Federation. Officers continue to support and monitor developments and the performance of the school.