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7 March 2014

Mr Alan Braven
Executive 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 to your school on 6 March 2014, 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 which 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 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 newly qualified teachers.

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 Manchester Federation of 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 third monitoring inspection on 6 March 2014.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the acting head of centre, the assistant headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants, members of the care staff, the Chair of the Buglawton Hall Committee of the Federation of Manchester EBD Schools and a community governor, a representative of the local authority and the school council.

This monitoring inspection took place at the same time as the school's annual Ofsted inspection of boarding provision, carried out by Christine Scully, Social Care Regulatory Inspector. Social care and education inspectors discussed aspects of mutual interest to both inspections.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the two acting assistant headteachers have been made permanent and one has been appointed as acting head of centre. The executive headteacher continues to be responsible overall for Buglawton Hall.

Achievement of pupils at the school

One of the main focuses of the inspection was to look for signs of improved outcomes in students' work. Clear evidence of higher standards and accelerated progress was seen.

The highest standards are seen in art and mathematics, the school's strongest subjects. Historically, students are most likely to obtain a GCSE qualification in these subjects. The students' work in their art sketchbooks is of a very high standard. The school is contemplating an early entry to GCSE for its Year 10 students. Progress in mathematics is accelerating, with some challenging work of good quality to be seen in students' workbooks. The improving confidence of more-able students was observed in mathematics, demonstrating their intuitive grasp of difficult ideas and their growing ability to explain their thinking.

Students are making accelerated progress in all their core skills. Challenging annual targets are set. The majority of students have made half of their targeted progress in one term. Nevertheless, because students entered the school with low levels of

core skills, often three or more years behind most pupils of their age, there remains much to be done. This is most urgent in literacy, in writing in particular, where students are least skilled and where they most lack confidence.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to improve. The aspects of better teaching observed during the previous monitoring inspection are now even more evident. These include well-prepared lessons with clear learning objectives and challenging subject material; effective support from teaching assistants; better marking; good management of behaviour, especially with students of widely different abilities; and higher expectations of students' finished work.

From a scrutiny of students' work, the level of challenge for Year 7 students is not sufficiently high. These students are taught in one classroom for all subjects along primary school lines by one teacher. This approach was originally intended for incoming Key Stage 2 pupils. Her Majesty's Inspector asked the school to review these arrangements for older cohorts.

The increasing quality of teaching is highlighting the underused capacity of the school to educate more boys. In several lessons, only one student is present. This does not constitute an efficient use of increasingly effective resources and it is not the best arrangement to meet the learning and social needs of the students.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Despite some notable successes, students continue to behave in ways that most schools would find very challenging. For example, individual students continue to walk out of lessons. However, crises for individual students no longer disrupt learning for others or threaten their safety. This is because the procedures for incidents, such as leaving lessons, are much better understood by staff and students; they work smoothly. Moreover, when lessons are missed, students know that they will be expected to catch up in order to avoid losing out on rewards. The school continues to experience more difficult behaviour from students following their return to school after the weekend.

The school's ethos is improving. On the day of the inspection it was calm and purposeful. Increasingly, classroom doors are left open, enhancing the sense of normality.

Students feel safer. They believe bullying is dealt with more effectively. Incidents requiring the physical intervention of staff are reducing. The emphasis on sanctions is being replaced by one on rewards and celebrating success. Students trust staff. They are well justified in their increasing confidence. Staff are very dedicated to the students. However, the improving provision for students is most due to the much

better teamwork between all groups of staff: between teachers and teaching assistants and between teaching assistants and care staff. For example, teaching assistants are more closely involved in the handovers at the beginning and end of the school day. Care staff are keen to continue providing broader educational experiences for the students after school, including helping students do their homework and to polish up their core skills, including reading. Staff at all levels feel more valued. To a much greater extent than normally seen in mainstream schools, administrative staff, catering staff and cleaning staff know students well and are a full part of the team that support them.

Three Year 11 students do not attend the school. They receive alternative education off site. The school would ideally prefer to provide for them on site. However, staff contact the providers of this alternative education daily to check on attendance. These students receive a vocational curriculum with additional teaching in the core skills.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Improvements in leadership and management continue to underpin improvements in all other areas. The executive headteacher continues to provide the school with rigorous oversight and the school's governing committee with good, professional advice that focuses sharply on the main areas of the school's work. The stronger foundations for leadership in evidence on the last visit have been further strengthened, enabling improvement to be accelerated. Most notably, the posts of assistant headteacher have been made permanent and a head of centre appointed. Securing these posts has provided increased stability; those who have been appointed have the full confidence of the rest of the staff.

Leaders are increasingly collecting and making better use of data. This is particularly evident in the monitoring of all aspects of behaviour and in checking the progress students make.

A clear sign of improving confidence in leadership is the emergence of new ideas from staff about how things could be made better. Suggestions concern several aspects of the curriculum, in particular, how to make best use of the extensive grounds of the Hall and to help better prepare students for life after school. Staff and governors are also considering how to reach out to parents more, a sure sign they are more confident about provision on site.

Governors are much more involved in school life. Students are used to seeing governors around school and talking to them. Partly, improved governance stems from the school having a dedicated committee with a high level of expertise focused solely on Buglawton Hall and on the recruitment of a community governor. This new governor is a regular visitor to school. He is making it his business to become

thoroughly familiar with the school, its staff and the students and promises to provide an important extension to the student voice.

External support

The local authority continues to provide officer support for the school and has provided the funding to place the school on a sound financial footing. When the school was placed in special measures a decision was taken by the local authority to halt further admissions of boys to the school. The improvements in leadership, behaviour and safety suggest the admission of new students may begin again without any concerns for their safety and wellbeing.