

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



31 March 2016

Mr Richard Crane
Executive Headteacher
Canon Lee School
Rawcliffe Drive
Clifton Without
York
YO30 6ZS

Dear Mr Crane,

Special measures monitoring inspection of Canon Lee School

Following my visit with Nick Whittaker, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 March 2016, 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 October 2015.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for the City of York. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2015.

- Swiftly improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least consistently good and all pupils make good progress, especially in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - work closely matches all pupils' varying needs and abilities, including the most able, and challenges them to do better
 - staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in order to drive up achievement across all subjects
 - high standards of presentation and handwriting are expected from pupils at all times
 - incisive subject feedback is given and pupils use it well, particularly boys
 - questioning is used skilfully to check pupils' learning and to deepen their understanding
 - pupils have good opportunities to develop their reading skills across a wide range of subjects
 - pupils' work, and discussions in lessons, are assessed regularly to ensure they are contributing well to learning
 - teachers manage the work of teaching assistants to help them make a strong contribution to learning.

- Improve the overall achievement of disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, by ensuring:
 - subject leaders check the quality of teaching of this group of pupils and take action should it fall short of what is required to help them make good progress
 - the attendance of those who do not go to school regularly improves so they can make an effective contribution to their learning
 - the pupil premium funding is used effectively for this group of pupils to improve their achievement, especially in English and mathematics.

- Rapidly improve the impact of leadership at all levels, including governance, by ensuring:
 - all leaders, including subject leaders, accurately assess the quality of teaching focusing strongly on the progress pupils are making
 - all leaders promote high expectations and ambition for all pupils so that teaching is at least consistently good
 - subject leaders make sure all staff follow the school's guidance for assessment so that pupils' progress improves rapidly

- the impact of the work to improve progress for disadvantaged pupils is checked closely and pupil premium funding is used to good effect
- attendance is improved to be at least average to strengthen pupils' achievements.

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

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 March 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders and groups of pupils. Inspectors also met the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and representatives from the local authority, including the assistant director and senior school improvement partner. Inspectors scrutinised current progress information and school monitoring information.

Context

An executive headteacher was appointed in November 2015. A number of staff have left the school, including a deputy headteacher and a subject leader.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher has brought much needed stability and purpose that have strengthened the senior leadership team, increasing internal capacity to drive improvement. Senior leaders, supported by the governing body, have acted decisively to address inadequate teaching and, as a result, a number of colleagues have moved on. Middle leaders are more rigorously involved in monitoring pupil progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Weekly review meetings between senior and middle leaders, informed by ongoing work scrutiny and observations of teaching, are leading to higher standards of accountability for all staff.

Senior leaders have shown the necessary urgency in addressing key issues, such as the inadequate quality of assessment. More robust systems to monitor performance and to track progress are now in place, leading to more effective interventions to support pupils who are underachieving. As assessment information is becoming more accurate, governors have access to more reliable information to hold school leaders to account. While the school action plan addresses key milestones for improvement, particularly for Year 11 pupils, these are not as clear for other years or key groups of pupils, and additional measures will be needed to specify improvement targets.

School leaders are balancing qualities of support and challenge to improve the quality of teaching and learning. School leaders have been more successful in developing strategies to support the individual skills of teachers in particular areas of practice. However, their response to whole-school issues, such as provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and the teaching of literacy across subjects, is less well developed.

While new leadership arrangements have started to build much needed stability and internal capacity for improvement, uncertainty exists over future leadership arrangements.

At its last inspection, the school was asked to undertake an external review of governance and of its use of the pupil premium. These have been completed and the school is awaiting the reports, which will be considered at the next monitoring inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Improvements are evident in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment but weaknesses remain. Increasing purpose is evident in many lessons where innovative strategies are engaging pupils from the outset. Pupils commented positively on the increasing challenge in many lessons. New assessment practices are beginning to provide pupils with clearer guidance on how to improve the quality of their work, as was evident in a Year 11 English lesson where pupils used feedback well to comment effectively upon language and structure. Current progress in Year 11 shows improvement, reflecting more focused teaching and higher aspirations.

However, some teachers still offer vague or formulaic feedback that does not support pupil progress, with pupils on occasions asked to provide 'more detail' without clear explanation of what that detail will look like. Misconceptions are not always swiftly addressed. Questioning is used to check understanding but too often it does not deepen or extend pupils' thinking, particularly for the most-able pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Attendance rates across the school are improving, as are those for key groups, including pupils eligible for the pupil premium, and pupils who have special educational needs or disability. New systems and higher staff presence are improving behaviour as pupils are responding to the new rewards and sanctions to secure improved behaviour in classrooms. Pupils commented upon a 'stricter' climate that was leading to a stronger focus on learning. Pupils said that they felt safe at school and that any incidents of bullying would be addressed.

While improvements are evident in standards of behaviour in classrooms and around the site, more work is required to build pupils' confidence. In too many lessons, pupils are reluctant to venture thoughts and ideas in class discussion. Teachers do not routinely deploy strategies that successfully encourage pupils to engage in discussion. Quick gains for pupils that could be achieved by getting the basics right are not being effected. For example, pupils do not consistently underline headings, date work or correctly tabulate and label work in science and mathematics.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils are making more rapid progress in English and mathematics in Year 11. Improving standards of assessment are leading to more accurate information on pupil progress. Predicted grades are now grounded in more rigorous processes, including common assessment tasks, internal and external moderation, sharper scrutiny of work and ongoing visits to classrooms. While these processes are leading to increasing accuracy, continued diligence will be required to ensure that the highly inaccurate projections of 2015 are not repeated.

Projections indicate improved progress, particularly in mathematics, at Key Stage 3, but slower progress persists in Year 9. Variation in the performance of key groups remains. For example, pupils who have special educational needs or disability are making stronger progress in mathematics than in English. The attendance of pupils eligible for the pupil premium has improved but their academic progress is not improving as quickly.

External support

The local authority has effectively brokered arrangements for the new leadership structure that has injected urgency into the school's drive for improvement. In addition, regular monitoring visits by the local authority provide external scrutiny of the school's work. Following further revision, the local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.