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Mrs Christine Mitchell
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mitchell

Special measures monitoring inspection of Chadwick High School

Following my visit to your school on 15 and 16 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 which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2015. 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers 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 for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2015

- Urgently improve the arrangements for safeguarding pupils in the school by:
 - ensuring that the management committee understands its duty to keep pupils safe, to follow safe recruitment procedures when appointing staff and to nominate an independent committee member to hold the school to account for safeguarding
 - implementing a safeguarding policy that is specific to the needs of pupils in the Chadwick Centre and Medical School
 - ensuring that pupil absences are properly recorded in accordance with statutory requirements, rigorously followed up and that safeguarding procedures are applied where any pupil is at risk.

- Take immediate action to improve the leadership and management, including governance, of the school sustainably by:
 - the senior leadership and governance developing a clear and ambitious vision for the Chadwick Centre and Medical School and planning its improvement systematically, with clear milestones to be achieved within set timescales
 - implementing rigorous checks on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching to identify strengths and weaknesses
 - driving the improvement of pupils' progress and of the quality of teaching relentlessly
 - ensuring that the management committee has all the detailed information it needs to be effective in holding the school to account
 - providing teachers with high-quality training and support so that they have the opportunity to teach well
 - bringing the curriculum and its assessment arrangements up to date with current requirements.

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement in the Chadwick Centre and Medical School, so both are at least good, by:
 - implementing a rigorous assessment of pupils' progress and ensuring that teachers take pupils' starting points into account when planning lessons so that work is matched more closely to their needs and abilities
 - ensuring that teachers and their assistants set high expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide greater challenge for pupils
 - developing pupils' knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics effectively
 - ensuring that the marking policy is applied consistently by all teachers and that their advice to pupils is acted upon by pupils and followed up by the teachers.

- Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance by:
 - strengthening the school's policy and procedures for managing pupils' behaviour and raising the expectations set by staff as to what constitutes good behaviour and an ethos of positive regard and respect for all in the school
 - setting high expectations for each pupil's attendance and celebrating good and improved attendance at school and to lessons.

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 the impact of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 March 2016

Evidence

The inspection focused on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, which related specifically to the school's actions to improve the quality of teaching.

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, a parent, teachers, and a representative from the local authority. The inspector also met with two governors and the national leader of governance who was appointed to facilitate the external review of governance. The inspector observed learning taking place and pupils' behaviour in and around school, and scrutinised a sample of pupils' work. Some of the inspector's observations were made jointly with the headteacher.

The inspector also scrutinised the school's documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils, including the single central record, governor records, staff files and records of the school's safer recruitment procedures.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, leaders have appointed experienced English and art teachers on a full-time and permanent basis. The English teacher has started teaching at the school on a part-time basis. Both posts take effect, on a full-time basis, following the school's break for the Easter holidays. A supply teacher has been employed to cover the vacancy for a teacher of mathematics. The process of recruiting a mathematics teacher is well under way. The school has appointed an additional administrative assistant. This person will take up the post following the school's completion of the appropriate suitability checks.

Two members of staff have returned following periods of prolonged absence.

The school comprises two main buildings. These buildings are referred to as the 'new building' and the 'old building'. Building work to reorganise the entrances to both buildings has been completed. The entrance to the old building is fully operational. The entrance to the new building will become operational when the additional administrative assistant takes up post.

There has been no movement with regard to the conversion of the school to an academy.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The strong leadership of the headteacher, reported on at the last monitoring inspection, has continued. The headteacher's clear vision for raising expectations as a means of elevating standards comes across loud and clear in the school's drive to improve teaching as the means to boost outcomes. The end-of-day debriefing meeting, where key information about pupils' progress on a day-to-day basis is shared, ensures that all adults focus sharply on improvements in pupils' academic and personal development.

The quality of teaching is improving. The headteacher has made excellent use of the school's links with outstanding schools in order to implement robust systems to enhance the quality of teaching. Pupils have benefited from teachers' sharing of good practice with their peers in the Ripley Teaching School Alliance. Leaders have implemented a programme of routine monitoring of teaching. Many of their observations of lessons have been made alongside a local authority senior adviser. As a result, leaders' support for and challenge to teachers are precise and appropriate. These are beginning to bear fruit in terms of raising adults' expectations of what pupils can achieve at the school.

The substantial redevelopment of the entrances to both buildings has contributed effectively to both keeping pupils safe and boosting pupils' self-worth. The new entrance to the old building ensures that visitors to the school are monitored closely in an appropriate environment. Pupils spoken to agreed that the new entrance added to the impression that Chadwick is a 'proper' school. Pupils were observed by the inspector to enter the old building in a calm and purposeful manner and ready to learn. This is a significant improvement compared with the previous inspection.

Governors' capacity to support and challenge the school has faltered since the last monitoring inspection. Leadership of the management committee is weak because a small minority of governors do not attend meetings frequently enough. Furthermore, a small minority of governors are not proactive in their specific responsibilities. Some provide very little support or challenge in management committee meetings when they do attend.

The school has been unable to carry out the appropriate suitability checks on three governors. The inspector's scrutiny of the school's records showed that a small proportion of governors have not supplied the school with their personal details. This is unacceptable. The headteacher and the local authority senior adviser gave assurances to the inspector that immediate action would be taken to rectify this shortfall in safeguarding procedures.

The school site remains unfit for purpose. Governors have not dealt with this issue with the gusto that is required. Trip hazards, such as damaged safety matting and protruding metal fence-post bases, had not been made safe at the time of the inspection. During the final day of the inspection, a site maintenance workman dismantled a wooden climbing frame. However, the work was not complete and therefore the inspector could not assess the impact of these actions in terms of pupils' safety. Controlled access to the school does not contribute to the safety of pupils. Points of access do not provide a sufficient barrier to deter members of the public from entering the site without the appropriate permissions.

A small number of governors with the appropriate experience and commitment offer a glimmer of hope. Governors appointed since the last inspection, with experience in the assessment of pupils' learning and in improving the quality of teaching, were observed challenging and supporting the headteacher effectively during a sub-committee meeting. The inspector's scrutiny of records of meetings of the management committee, along with his discussions with leaders, show that governors' understanding of the school's use of the pupil premium grant has improved. This robust approach to the use of government grants is a direct result of a dogged determination by lead governors to ensure improvements in this area.

The quality of teaching

The inspector's observations, along with his scrutiny of samples of pupils' work, corroborate leaders' and the local authority's assessment that teaching has improved at an appropriate rate since the last monitoring inspection. Where there has been stability in terms of teachers and teaching assistants since the last monitoring inspection, the signs of improvement are beginning to shine through. Teachers, along with teaching assistants, know the pupils well. Teachers plan effectively to ensure that learning activities match precisely pupils' specific needs and interests. Several teachers hook the interest of pupils with subtle anecdotes and references to previous learning which catch the imagination of pupils. In an English lesson, for example, pupils listened intently when the teacher made reference to a ghost in the school building. In these instances, pupils could relate to the subject and made rapid gains in their learning.

On occasions, teachers' planning is not sharply focused on pupils' academic progress. The inspectors' scrutiny of a sample of teachers' planning shows that they almost always set an appropriate whole-class learning objective. However, teachers set pupils individual targets that are related predominantly to changes in their behaviour. In these instances, pupils and other adults in the classroom do not have a strong steer on how modifications in pupils' behaviour can impact directly on their learning. As a result, on occasions opportunities to boost pupils' progress further are missed.

Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. This is due to the combined effect of the school's strong systems to assess and record pupils' progress, and teachers' strong links with colleagues in other schools. Teachers spoken to were able to identify which pupils have the potential to reach the highest standards. Pupil progress meetings, held between pupils and their key workers, reinforce well the high expectations. A small number of pupils spoken to were confident in predicting that they would achieve good grades at GCSE level. However, pupils' personal improvement targets do not yet focus sharply on their academic progress, for example by linking changes in their behaviour to improvements in their learning. Consequently, there remain missed opportunities to raise even higher the expectations of what all pupils can achieve.

Teachers follow well the school's feedback policy in order to boost pupils' confidence. Samples of pupils' work show that teachers mark and add their comments to pupils' work frequently. This ensures that pupils feel their work is valued by adults in the school. Written comments by teachers identify what the pupil has done well and a significant majority give pupils appropriate guidance on how to improve their work further. However, teachers do not use this opportunity to stretch pupils' learning further.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During the monitoring inspection, pupils were polite, well mannered and prepared to talk about their experience in school. Most were engaged in learning and any low-level, negative behaviour was handled well by staff to re-engage pupils. Pupils' attitudes in lessons were mainly positive. This is a result of greater consistency within the school.

In discussion, pupils say that they feel safe in school and say that there is little or no bullying in school. Those pupils who attend off-site alternative provision to experience the construction, motor vehicle maintenance, and hair and beauty industries value their placements because these lead to appropriate qualifications. This group of pupils attend, behave and achieve well while on their placements.

Pupils in Key Stage 4 benefit from taking part in The Prince's Trust qualifications. These qualifications are providing the impetus for a good proportion of pupils to develop strong employability skills. During the inspection, one group of pupils took part in a Prince's Trust event held at Trafford Park in Manchester. These pupils demonstrated their excellent behaviour and increasingly mature attitudes by participating in a series of group activities and personal challenges with their peers from other schools across the region.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's own records show that attainment remains low. Leaders have established an improved admissions process so that they receive the necessary information from referring schools prior to pupils starting at Chadwick High School. This enables teachers to begin to plug the gaps in this group of pupils' learning, set appropriate targets for academic attainment and measure accurately pupils' progress. However, more needs to be done to ensure that the school receives adequate information about the specific needs of pupils whose placements are unplanned, for example due to exclusion from their mainstream school. Pupils for whom the school holds the least information are often those who cause the most disruption to their own and other pupils' learning.

Low attendance prevents too many pupils from making strong progress. This, in turn, leads to their underachievement. The proportion of pupils with an attendance level of over 90% has increased to one in five pupils, compared with almost none prior to the previous inspection. The impact of this step in the right direction is undermined by the high proportion of pupils with erratic and low attendance. The school's system to record and monitor attendance is robust. It is used well by leaders to identify which pupils and groups of pupils need the most support with their attendance. Leaders acknowledge that their next step is to raise pupils' expectations in terms of their improved attendance as a means of reducing underachievement.

External support

Leaders have made effective use of their contacts with the local authority's school improvement service. Support and challenge from school improvement officers has ensured that systems to track pupils' progress and to monitor the quality of teaching are now secure. These systems are beginning to contribute effectively to improvements across the school.

Strong links with local primary and secondary schools, including with the Ripley Teaching School Alliance, are contributing well to the improvements in the quality of teaching and leaders' use of pupils' progress information.

Action should be taken to:

- bolster the potency of the governing body by ensuring that all governors have the skills and demonstrate the commitment necessary to support and challenge leaders effectively
- increase the urgency with which the school site is made fit for purpose
- rectify immediately the shortfalls in the suitability checks on governors.