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16 June 2016

Richard Woods
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Woods

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hanson School

Following my visit with Robert Pritchard, Ofsted Inspector, and Fiona Dixon, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 May 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.

This was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve students' behaviour and safety in the main school, including their attendance and punctuality, by:
 - making sure that all staff are trained appropriately in safeguarding and child protection procedures and systems are fit for purpose to ensure the safety of students
 - ensuring the school's work with the local authority and its agencies results in students being kept safe and secure
 - eradicating bullying so that students stay safe and feel safe
 - ensuring all adults challenge students' misbehaviour and swearing around the school consistently and effectively
 - eradicating incidents of some students' disregard for the safety of others and lack of respect for adults
 - reducing persistent low-level disruption, and instances of misbehaviour in lessons so that learning improves
 - consistently challenging poor attitudes to learning and having high expectations of students' presentation of work especially for boys
 - reducing the number of students regularly absent from school, particularly disadvantaged students and those with disabilities or special educational needs
 - developing effective practices to ensure students are punctual to school and to lessons

- Swiftly improve the achievement of all groups of students and the quality of teaching so both are consistently good or better, by making sure that:
 - there are high expectations of what all students can achieve, including the most able and boys
 - work set matches the needs and abilities of all groups of students, particularly for those students who are disadvantaged, those with disabilities and those with special educational needs
 - teachers' questioning is skilful, draws out students' understanding and challenges them to think deeply
 - students give extended answers to teachers' questioning in order to improve their level of oracy
 - students' work is marked regularly, clear subject guidance is given for improvement and students are expected to respond to improve their work
 - regular and meaningful homework is provided to students to develop their learning

- extra support for students, including those with hearing impairment, is managed more effectively to ensure that they make good progress
 - reading, writing, speaking and mathematical skills are developed effectively across all subjects.
- Rapidly improve the impact of leaders at all levels, including governors, by ensuring that:
- senior leaders and governors gain overwhelming support from staff for their actions to improve the school
 - greater stability in staffing is achieved to provide students with more continuity in their education
 - there is a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning to eradicate that which presently requires improvement or is inadequate
 - the pupil premium funding is used effectively to improve the achievement, behaviour and attendance of those students supported by it
 - all subject leaders rigorously check the consistent application of school policies so that teaching, learning and behaviour are at least good in all subjects
 - senior leaders support middle leaders effectively in fulfilling their responsibilities
 - support staff are trained effectively to help those students with hearing impairments and other students, especially those with disabilities and special educational needs, to achieve well
 - the school's plans for improvement clearly link to students' achievement and the quality of teaching so the impact of leaders' actions in improving the school can be measured accurately
 - governors hold leaders, including middle leaders, rigorously to account for students' achievement and the quality of teaching
 - governors fulfil all of their statutory duties and meticulously check that the school is compliant with all statutory regulations at all times.
- Increase the amount of progress students make in academic subjects in the sixth form and improve the success rate of students who re-sit GCSEs in Year 12, by ensuring that:
- the quality of teaching is at least good across all academic subjects
 - all subject leaders check the quality of teaching and progress in the sixth form more rigorously.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 18 to 19 May 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, carried out joint observations with senior leaders, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, senior and subject directors from the Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT), groups of pupils, members of the interim executive board (IEB) and representatives from the local authority.

Context

A new permanent headteacher took up post in April 2016. He is employed by WCAT and is working under a service-level agreement agreed with the IEB. A new head of English also took up post at Easter. Three teachers left at Easter. At present, 17 long-term temporary teachers are substituting for six vacant posts in English and two absences in mathematics, as well as for absences and vacancies in other subjects. Nine staff are on long-term sickness absence. Recent appointments have reduced the number of vacancies for September 2016. At present, there is one vacancy in English and one in mathematics. Senior and subject directors from WCAT continue to work alongside senior leaders and the leaders of English, mathematics and science to bring about improvements.

The school did not convert, as planned, to a Wakefield City Academies Trust academy on 1 May 2016. The remaining obstacle to conversion is close to resolution. The intention of all stakeholders is for the conversion to have taken place in readiness for the start of the next academic year.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The permanent appointment of the new headteacher promises much-needed stability, stronger consistency of leadership and management and more sustained direction and improvement. The IEB, senior leaders and staff value the leadership experience the headteacher brings. Pupils are giving him a cautious welcome and await reassurance that his appointment heralds greater stability. A Year 12 student accurately stated that she has had 11 different headteachers while at the school. The headteacher has declared his commitment to staying at the school to realise its potential. He is communicating a clear vision for stronger systems to guide teaching, learning and behaviour and more rigorous accountability for leaders and staff. The academy trust, school leaders and the IEB are aware of the task ahead and plans are in place to move forward more rapidly.

The headteacher is tackling the continuing high levels of staff absence. On the first day of the inspection 8% of teachers were absent; higher than the absence of

pupils. The headteacher has instigated a formal system for managing staff absence, supported by the IEB and trade unions, with staged procedures that can lead to termination of employment. The attendance of support staff has improved more than the attendance of teachers.

Effective steps have been taken to recruit more teachers on permanent contracts. The academy trust and leaders are taking advantage of wider recruitment pools through WCAT, Teach First and the new National Teaching Service. Retention of staff is higher this year and the prospects of more stable staffing in September are stronger.

Senior leaders have introduced the WCAT appraisal system with a new mid-point review. This demands a more structured and wide-ranging evidence-based review of strengths and weaknesses in staff performance. This is enabling leaders to provide staff with earlier and more robust feedback about progress towards their targets. Formal standards are raising the expectations of leaders at all levels. The headteacher's accountability map delegates more responsibility to the extended senior leadership team. Appointments are strengthening leadership structures in science and English. The quality of middle leadership remains variable and not all subject leaders have a realistic view of their own effectiveness.

Senior leaders have started a rolling coaching programme to tackle identified weaknesses in teaching. This focuses more sharply on individual development needs, with timescales for improvement. Of the teachers supported in the first two rounds of coaching, half improved and others continue to receive support. In a few cases, teachers decided to leave the school.

The new assessment and tracking system is giving teachers and subject leaders more accurate information and higher-quality analysis about the progress of pupils in each class and year group. This provides better tools for subject leaders and teachers to account for the progress pupils make. This is at an early stage of informing the planning of teaching. Sixth form leaders are beginning to use data more intelligently and are beginning to raise questions about the quality of teaching in classes where learners are making less progress.

Leaders of the Additional Resource Centre (ARC) for hearing and visually impaired pupils communicate high aspirations and continue to bring about improvements. The ARC has increased its capacity for supporting hearing impaired pupils by appointing a specialist who is able to teach and assess the use of British sign language (BSL) and mentor other staff. Further specialist staff vacancies are yet to be filled. The expectations of support staff have been raised through new job specifications and training. As a result, they have developed more confidence and skills. For example, a teaching assistant is developing a method of marking for teachers that will provide better access for braille users.

WCAT and senior leaders are planning to reduce the large budget deficit and are reviewing the costs and structure of the curriculum, including in the sixth form, to make it more fit for purpose. Leaders are revising the curriculum to ensure that pupils gain qualifications that will be needed in future for post-16 education and beyond. Sixth form recruitment, which declined in 2015 due to the poor GCSE results, is higher for 2016. The school has identified that the provision for modern foreign languages is not strong enough at key stage 3, with the result that too few learners take languages at key stage 4.

This year, the number of pupils taught off-site in alternative provision halved and only a few will be off-site next year. The school is taking greater responsibility for these pupils' education and the qualifications they gain. The promotion of reading and support for weaker readers are being strengthened by improving the organisation and impact of reading programmes and the school library.

The IEB has recently ratified a new pupil premium policy which makes a more principled commitment to meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils and gives information about overall funding and proposed activities for the coming year. Actions so far have had little impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

The IEB plays a strong and robust role in working with other stakeholders to ensure the forward momentum of the school. The IEB is working closely with WCAT and the local authority to ensure a smooth transition to academy status and preparations are well advanced. The IEB is using the service-level agreement well to monitor actions and evaluate impact and is dealing with issues promptly as they emerge. As a result, all stakeholders are working together effectively towards a common purpose.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching by permanent teachers has continued to improve and is becoming more effective, though improvement is still needed in some areas. Some higher-quality temporary teachers who have been given longer contracts are making an important contribution to the quality and continuity of pupils' learning. However, weakness in the quality of temporary teaching remains a key obstacle to improving the quality of learning. The continued instability of staffing and the uneven quality of teaching, especially in English, have continued to impede the progress of some classes. Pupils in these classes are behind in their work and there are gaps in their knowledge. These pupils crave for more stability in teaching.

A school audit has shown that most teachers have adopted the new school approach for starting lessons in an active and engaging way. As a result, lessons are getting off to a more positive start. Leaders' next step is to introduce common expectations for using learning objectives and success criteria. Currently, these are not always used consistently, or expressed clearly, and some tasks set by teachers result in

doing rather than learning. Leaders are considering the adoption of methods and models used in WCAT schools in order to create more consistent expectations for teaching, learning and the presentation of pupils' work.

Marking has had more rigorous scrutiny and is beginning to have more impact. Examples of better marking in science and religious studies lessons showed pupils acting effectively on advice and making improvements. Year 12 learners reported that they were getting more regular feedback on their progress. Effective coaching led to a teacher giving more frequent, precise and constructive feedback to pupils and as a result they made better progress in music. The quality of written feedback does not consistently meet the school's standards. Pupils say they do not receive sufficient guidance on how to improve. In some English classes taught by temporary teachers, books are not marked for long periods of time, which does not comply with school policy.

In most lessons, staff create positive relationships with pupils. Teachers use good questioning skills to make pupils think rather than just giving them the answers. In more effective teaching, tasks are tailored to the needs of the pupils.

In some lessons, activities are mundane and do not stimulate pupils' interest. As a result, some low-level disruption and inappropriate calling out hinders progress. Teaching does not always challenge the most able. Some timetabling does not help learning. For example, pupils are bored and inattentive by the end of a two-hour mathematics lesson.

Mainstream staff are gaining greater awareness of the needs of hearing and visually impaired pupils and taking greater account of their needs in lessons. Their progress in mainstream lessons is sometimes limited when subject teaching is weaker.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The school has dramatically improved attendance from 90.5% in 2015 to 94% at present, which is close to the 2015 national average. Persistent absence, which was high, has been reduced significantly and is now better than the 2015 national average. Data analysis is being used more effectively to target actions and the school makes phone calls and home visits for particular pupils more quickly. Better alternative provision for disaffected Year 10 pupils has improved their attendance. Attendance has also improved because the school is a safer, more orderly and more welcoming environment where pupils are greeted positively as they arrive at school.

When pupils arrive at the front door, staff continue to remind them to have their equipment ready. This strategy, along with the high profile of senior staff, means that most lessons get off to a swift and purposeful start. However, some pupils are not punctual enough between lessons. A few dawdle in toilets instead of getting to lessons.

Fixed-term exclusions have reduced dramatically to well below the national average as a result of the much improved management of behaviour. In addition, the frequency of calls for senior staff to behaviour incidents in lessons has fallen significantly to a relatively low level. Senior staff proactively visit classes where there are known difficulties and help to prevent poor behaviour before it happens.

Most pupils respond promptly to instructions and generally work well and cooperate with each other. However, in a minority of lessons observed there was some shouting out and poor attitudes to learning. Low-level disruption occurs more frequently with cover or supply teachers. Work is not always appropriate and the pupils, including a few higher-ability pupils, get bored and misbehave. To combat this, a high challenge group has recently been set up to stretch and challenge the most able.

The recorded incidents of bullying have reduced. Bullying has been tackled through an anti-bullying week and an anti-bullying pledge. Work in enrichment time on issues such as 'rumour' teaches pupils how this can be a form of bullying.

Pupils report that behaviour around the corridors and at breaktimes has improved. Break and lunchtimes are generally calm, but there are still a few pupils who go to areas they should not.

Staff and pupils have followed a number of behaviour systems and are keen to have stability by sticking to one method and ensuring that it is applied consistently and rigorously by all staff, in all areas of the school, and over time. Pupils also said they are keen to receive more rewards for good behaviour and good work.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders predict an increase in the proportion of pupils who will gain five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, in 2016. The school expects a larger improvement in science than in mathematics or English. Results are expected to improve in most subjects.

Rates of progress for Year 11 are improving more securely in science and mathematics than in English. This reflects the prolonged discontinuity in learning in English caused by high levels of staff absence, unfilled vacancies and the extensive use of temporary teachers. The school estimates that the overall rate of progress at GCSE has improved and the school is on track to meet the national floor standards for attainment and progress in 2016.

Improvements in Year 11 have been brought about by leaders' more stringent approach to checking the accuracy of assessment, more rigorous analysis of

progress and more rapid action to tackle underachievement. Staff and pupils have demonstrated a high level of commitment by attending Saturday morning and Easter catch-up and revision sessions.

School assessment indicates that pupil progress at key stage 3 and in Year 10 has begun to improve, but some pupils are not making rapid enough progress. Achievement remains below the school's expectations. Plans are in place for new key stage 3 intervention leaders to accelerate the progress of pupils who are not making rapid enough progress. Higher-ability pupils say they are not challenged enough. The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others are not closing.

Observations in post-16 vocational courses indicate that many learners are on track to achieve their targets. In a few classes with unstable staffing, learners are underperforming. Year 12 are already well on with their personal statements. Learners say they are being well prepared for the next chapter of their education.

External support

The local authority, the IEB and WCAT are working effectively together to bring about the academy conversion. Communication is open and relationships are good. Seemingly intractable obstacles to conversion are being overcome through robust dialogue. WCAT has taken the lead in bringing about necessary school improvements. WCAT identified and recruited the new headteacher and has been instrumental in improving the recruitment of staff for next September. WCAT is starting to introduce more efficient management systems and more comprehensive performance management procedures.

An experienced headteacher from WCAT provides helpful strategic support and on-site practical advice for senior leaders. WCAT subject directors are frequently on-site and their close and expert guidance is bringing about significant improvements in the leadership and management of English, mathematics and science. The WCAT-led development of the mathematics curriculum is improving teaching and learning at key stage 4, with plans to extend this to key stage 3.

The local authority has continued to play a valuable role in evaluating the effectiveness of the ARC and in helping senior leaders to develop a more sharply focused approach to professional development. The local authority has been contracted to provide continued leadership support for the ARC following academy conversion. After the conversion the ARC will continue to be a local authority resource led and managed by the academy.