

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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22 July 2016

Mr S Cameron  
Headteacher  
Hallmoor School  
Scholars Gate  
Kitts Green  
Birmingham  
B33 0DL

Dear Mr Cameron

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Hallmoor School**

Following my visit with Simon Mosley, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Jonathan Keay, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 July 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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 appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2015**

- Take urgent and effective action to:
  - complete the single central record
  - ensure that all necessary checks of all staff and relevant adults have been completed and recorded to the required standard
  - remedy the weaknesses in child protection procedures and ensure that actions taken are fully recorded
  - fully record all incidents of physical intervention and analyse these to see if there are any patterns and trends in order to take any necessary action
  - develop pupils' independence in moving around the school, ensuring that they are not moved by adults unless this is strictly necessary
  - reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent for reasons other than genuine medical conditions.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - improving leaders' and governors' knowledge and understanding of safeguarding requirements and good practice in keeping children safe
  - clarifying each leader's roles and responsibilities, and holding them to account for the impact of their work
  - ensuring that leaders gain an accurate understanding of all aspects of the school's work, and raising their expectations of themselves and others
  - developing a system to accurately assess pupils' progress in all key stages, particularly in Key Stages 4 and 5 and the complex needs classes
  - using this assessment information alongside pupils' work and direct observations of learning to evaluate the quality of teaching over time
  - urgently reviewing all aspects of provision and outcomes in the complex needs classes
  - planning a coherent curriculum in all subjects, prioritising reading, writing and mathematics, for all key stages
  - putting in place a suitable sex and relationships education curriculum
  - ensuring that the sixth form curriculum and accreditation allow pupils to progress from Key Stage 4 and to demonstrate this progress
  - ensuring that governors gain an accurate understanding of the school's work and provide an appropriate level of challenge.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, and thereby pupils' achievement, by:
  - ensuring that assessment in lessons and over time is accurate
  - using this assessment information to plan tasks in each lesson that are suitable for pupils' needs and build on their skills, knowledge and understanding
  - maximising the role of teaching assistants to promote pupils' independence and help them to make progress
  - ensuring that resources are suitable for pupils' ages and needs.

An external review of governance, including a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 July 2016**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of pupils. Inspectors met with the chair and a member of the interim executive board (IEB), held a telephone conversation with another member of the board, met with a representative of the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) and spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. Inspectors looked closely at the school's information about safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, achievement, teaching and learning. They observed lunchtimes and spoke to pupils informally throughout the two days.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection two teachers have left the school. Six teachers and one member of support staff have joined.

During the second day of the inspection almost half of the pupils were absent to celebrate Eid. The school disbanded the timetable and held an 'international day' where pupils experienced a range of activities.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The headteacher and senior leaders, with the support of the staff, have once again improved the quality of the school's work and thereby the outcomes for pupils. Improvements have been made to the effectiveness of safeguarding, the school's work with parents, the accuracy of assessment and the quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics. The analysis of behaviour and attendance has improved. Plans for the curriculum for September, especially for the sixth form, are good.

The school has built on the good work already being carried out to safeguard pupils. Training for staff has addressed newly emerging issues as well as the important aspect of radicalisation and extremism. The school is taking the lead with other agencies, including the police, to make sure that work with individual families focuses strongly on the needs of the pupils. Innovative workshops with parents whose children have raised safeguarding concerns have been well attended and well received. Importantly, the in-school safeguarding team has been expanded to ensure that more people are trained and skilled to the level required to meet the many needs of the pupils.

In addition to the workshops on safeguarding, the school has run successful sessions for parents to help them to manage their children's behaviour. Parents were offered practical strategies which they are already finding valuable. The accredited child

development course is running again, and is well attended. The popularity of the courses for parents is ever-increasing, which is helping to forge very positive relationships between families and school.

Leaders are now confident that they have accurate information about the progress of all pupils in English and mathematics. They have developed a robust process for reaching their conclusions. This process involves extensive professional dialogue within school and with teachers and leaders from other schools, both special and mainstream. Teaching assistants' involvement in assessment has provided a valuable level of challenge to the process, as well as professional development for these support staff. Teachers are using the assessment information increasingly well to plan their lessons both on a short- and a long-term basis. Subject leaders have carried out initial assessments of what pupils know and can do in science, information and communications technology (ICT) and personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and now have a clear baseline to plan the next steps.

Well-planned training has taken place for all new and temporary teachers, and for higher level teaching assistants who are covering classes. This training focused clearly on the 'Hallmoor Commitments' (the non-negotiable aspects of everyone's work), and on giving teachers strategies and resources to teach well. The positive impact of this training was seen on a number of occasions during the inspection.

Developments in mathematics have continued at a suitably fast pace, focusing on improving staff's knowledge, understanding and confidence, and on ensuring that the curriculum allows pupils to attain qualifications at the highest possible level. There has been a clear focus on improving pupils' reading and communication skills. The leaders of English and mathematics closely monitor and evaluate the impact of all the new initiatives to ensure that they are effective.

Information about behaviour, bullying, physical intervention and attendance is now analysed in a useful way which enables leaders to see patterns and trends and to act accordingly.

Careful thought has been put into how to improve the curriculum ready for September. The curriculum offer that has been planned for the sixth form provides different pathways onto which pupils will be placed according to their needs. These all have a strong focus on preparing pupils for their life after school, including developing the skills they need to travel independently. Students for whom it is appropriate will take qualifications. There is a strong element of PSHE and sex and relationships education. Lower down the school, more time has been allocated from September to PSHE, and the subject leader will be enabled to teach more pupils directly as well as to support staff. Leaders are maintaining the greater focus on enabling older pupils to take qualifications at as high a level as possible.

Subject and pastoral leadership is developing well. Middle leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They have received specific training related to their roles. They now have a clearer focus on pupils' progress and on supporting their teams in order to ensure that pupils progress as well as they can.

The IEB has continued to provide some effective support through their visits to school, particularly for safeguarding and for teaching and learning. IEB meetings focus appropriately on key aspects of the school's work. However, not all the IEB members think that the IEB meetings are supportive enough, sometimes being unnecessarily challenging. This is also the view of some of the senior leadership team, who do not feel the school's progress is acknowledged as readily as it might be. Occasionally, aspects of the challenge from IEB members stray into operational matters rather than strategic elements of the school's work. One member of the IEB has not been able to attend any meetings for several months, leaving the board very small considering its responsibilities. The chair agrees that more IEB members would be helpful.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, relationships between the headteacher and some of the IEB members have become strained. Communication between the two parties has worsened. This situation threatens to undermine the positive progress that the school has been making over an extended period of time. The chair of the IEB and the headteacher acknowledge that this situation needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching continues to improve. Teachers are thinking more carefully about what they want the pupils to learn in each lesson and over time. During the lessons visited as part of the inspection the impact of the training that leaders have run on questioning was clear. Questions at the right level were carefully directed to different pupils. Importantly, pupils were given time to think and reflect before responding. Where appropriate, pupils had the opportunity to talk to each other to develop their understanding and reasoning. Teaching assistants' skills continue to develop well. They are benefiting from the range of training they are receiving, as well as from being deployed more effectively by teachers.

There is ample evidence of the impact of the school's work to improve the use of phonics knowledge. This was seen to good effect in a reading lesson with younger pupils, and also with older pupils in various contexts. A particularly good example was when a sixth form student used her knowledge of phonics to sound out the word 'gullible'. She was then able to find out the meaning.

Teachers and teaching assistants are thinking carefully about when it is appropriate to teach pupils directly and when they need time to work or learn independently. For example in a t'ai chi session, staff stepped back and let sixth form students copy t'ai

chi moves from the film they were watching, supporting only when necessary. This resulted in excellent focus and concentration and a great deal of enjoyment. In a sixth form English lesson, staff directed and explained, then moved away to allow students to work in groups to complete the task.

During the international day, pupils from all year groups participated in a range of activities including t'ai chi, creating dragon masks, playing samba, Mexican cooking, football, storytelling from Africa, cricket, origami, writing postcards from Europe and designing a symbol for the world. All pupils were fully engaged, interested and learning new skills. They learned and reapplied skills and knowledge in different situations. Literacy skills were developed well through writing postcards and numeracy was developed through origami sessions. Physical activity was promoted through football, cricket and t'ai chi.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils are responding well to the high expectations staff have of their behaviour and attitudes. Staff are now consistently talking to pupils in an age-appropriate manner. Sixth form students provide good role models for the rest of the school. Throughout the inspection, as on previous occasions, pupils were polite and welcoming to the inspection team and clearly proud of their school. They greeted inspectors appropriately and were keen to talk about or show what they were doing. On the second day of the inspection, pupils coped extremely well to a complete change to their routine. They were highly enthusiastic about moving from one part of the school to another to take part in new activities. Their concentration and motivation were impressive.

During the international day, democracy was discussed during a session linked to the EU referendum, building on a previous mock election that had been held in school. One female sixth form student commented, 'It was really important that I voted as women died so I could vote.' This led to animated discussion about the topic. Pupils' awareness of different cultures was developed as activities during the day were linked to different countries. Tolerance and respect were also promoted through exploring aspects of different cultures.

Every pupil is about to take part in some way in a production called, 'pirates versus mermaids', either by performing or by designing and painting the set. Recently, 19 key stage 4 pupils performed in a choir alongside mainstream peers at the Symphony Hall in Birmingham.

At lunchtime, pupils thoroughly enjoyed playing games and taking part in outdoor activities – many of which demanded that they cooperated with each other. Others sat at benches and chatted calmly, or walked around the playground alone or with friends. Staff strike a careful balance between encouraging pupils to take part in activities and recognising when they may prefer to be by themselves for a while.



The school's attendance information indicates that the overall attendance rate has improved slightly since the previous inspection. Low attendance remains an issue for a significant group of pupils, but 75% of these have shown improvements in their attendance since the time of the previous monitoring inspection. Better recording and analysis of bullying is enabling the school to tackle more effectively the small number of incidents that do occur. The use of physical intervention remains low and no pupils have been excluded.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The school's assessment information indicates that the majority of pupils are making at least expected progress in English and mathematics. Around a quarter in mathematics and just over a third in English are making good or better progress. These judgements are supported by the work in pupils' books and the work seen in lessons and around the school during the inspection. For example, displays in corridors show how individual pupils' writing has improved over the course of the year. The school has less information about progress in other subjects, although this is beginning to develop. Many pupils with more complex needs are making good progress with their concentration, motivation and independence.

For the first time at Hallmoor, pupils in Years 11 to 14 have been entered for GCSE and equivalent examinations in English, mathematics and art. While results are not yet known, pupils sat their examinations as planned and the school is optimistic that some will gain a result.

In PSHE, information emerging from assessment, safeguarding referrals and staff's conversations with pupils suggest that many pupils are making good progress in this crucial aspect of learning. Pupils are developing a greater awareness of staying safe in the home, the community and online and are talking more openly with adults about what concerns them.

### **External support**

The school has recently received some more responsive support from the local authority for their safeguarding concerns than they have done in the past. A range of support has been provided by Brays, Hallmoor's support school, some of which the school has found useful. At times, though, Hallmoor leaders feel that this support strays too much into monitoring. BEP has monitored the school's progress accurately and carefully.

BEP, and Birmingham local authority's governor support team, are aware of the urgent need to support the school to resolve the issues around communication and relationships between the IEB and the headteacher. The local authority is seeking new members to extend the board's capacity.

The school still does not have a dedicated police and community support officer, something that they would find very valuable.