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Ms Holly Rigby
Head of School
The Telford Park School
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Dear Ms Rigby

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Telford Park School

Following my visit (with Catherine Crooks, Her Majesty's Inspector) to your school on 13–14 December 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 February 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the education advisory board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Telford and Wrekin. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that every student is given the opportunity to make the progress they should and attain the standards they are capable of, by:
 - ensuring teachers use data about students' prior ability to plan learning that takes into account what students already know and can do
 - encouraging teaching that engages students' interest, challenges them to think hard and be less dependent upon adult support
 - ensuring that teacher assessment of students' work is accurate so that predictions can be relied upon
 - improving the quality of marking so that it helps students improve and take pride in their work
 - extending the focus on developing and promoting good literacy skills so that literacy becomes an integral part of teaching and learning in all subjects
 - developing the quality of teachers' questioning skills so that they are able to probe and stretch students' thinking and oral skills.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels, including governance. In particular:
 - ensure that processes for monitoring the quality of education (in terms of achievement, teaching and behaviour) are systematic, rigorous and effective, result in prompt identification of underperformance and urgent and effective actions to bring about improvement
 - ensure leaders model the high standards required of all staff, for example in terms of marking and dealing with behavioural issues
 - improve the curriculum, including the structure of the day, so that it engages students, makes them want to attend and do well and ensures that they develop work-related skills to prepare them for their adult lives
 - ensure that the quality of education provided for students who are removed from normal classes because their behaviour is a concern and those students who are educated off-site for part of the week is of a quality that enables them to make at least the progress they are capable of
 - ensure that governors have the skills to hold academy leaders to account and to take firm action when performance falls below that expected.
- Senior leaders must develop a culture of high expectations about all aspects of the education students receive so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- Improve behaviour and safety so that all students are given the opportunity to learn well and feel safe by:
 - introducing a clear and transparent behaviour policy that is consistently applied by all staff, including all leaders, and is linked clearly to improving learning
 - improving systems to record, monitor and evaluate attendance, lateness and

behavioural incidents so that leaders and staff can identify quickly when and where problems arise and take urgent and effective action to bring about improvement

- ensuring that all students feel safe in all areas of the academy
 - raising students' expectations of what is acceptable behaviour towards other students or staff.
- Improve students' achievement by ensuring that, from their starting points, all students, including the most able students, disadvantaged students, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, make at least the progress they should. In addition:
- ensure that students whose behaviour means they are removed from normal lessons and placed in small group or one-to-one provision, and students who are educated off-site for some of the week, learn well
 - improve the literacy skills of all students whose reading ages are below their chronological ages in order to ensure they can participate confidently in lessons in all subjects.
- 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 academy'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 13 December 2016 to 14 December 2016

Evidence

During this inspection, inspectors met with the head of school, the deputy head of school, other members of the senior leadership team and middle leaders. They also met with the chief executive officer of the Community Academies Trust, which is the academy sponsor. It was not possible to speak to the chair of the education advisory board, which is responsible for governance, during the inspection.

Inspectors spoke to pupils during breaks and lunchtimes and in classrooms, and met formally with groups of pupils. Inspectors visited lessons and scrutinised school documents, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and records of pupils' progress and attainment.

Context

Since the third monitoring visit, the acting headteacher has been appointed as substantive head of school from May 2016. A new deputy head of school was appointed from September 2016. There is no music teaching post at present and the history teaching post is covered by supply staff. The head of science was on maternity leave during the inspection visit. A new governor has very recently been appointed to oversee safeguarding. A new coordinator for careers was appointed from September 2016. There have been several changes of teaching staff since the last monitoring visit.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and governors have a very accurate and realistic view of where the school is on its journey and why it is not yet ready to come out of special measures. Outcomes at GCSE in 2016 were very low and remain low in the current Year 11. Predictions made in March 2016 proved to be over-optimistic. Leaders realised this by the summer term. As a result of more rigorous monitoring systems put in place, they revised their expectations accordingly. Systems to ensure greater accuracy in GCSE predictions have been developed, including greater use of validation across the trust and externally.

Performance management systems are thorough and linked to collecting evidence from lesson observations, pupils' work and achievement information, as well as talking to pupils about their work. Training for staff is tailored according to need. Plans are in place for coaching and open-door sessions for teachers, but it is too early to see the impact of the training. Some staff are very new and others have temporary contracts. There have been further staffing changes as teachers are held increasingly to account for their performance.

Senior leadership has been enhanced with an additional post created, which has increased the school's capacity to hold other leaders and staff to account. Leadership arrangements are closely aligned with The Telford Langley School, another school in the trust. This has increased capacity for monitoring the effectiveness of leaders' actions and their impact on teaching and outcomes for pupils. The school has seen improvements in provision in mathematics since leadership for the subject has been based at Telford Park, rather than at Telford Langley as before. The department has also expanded in size. Science remains a cause for concern, however. It is too early to assess the impact of recently introduced initiatives designed to impact positively on pupil progress and improve the consistency of teachers' written feedback to pupils. There is a high level of consistency in teachers applying the behaviour policy, however.

The school still faces significant challenges in Year 11 where the mobility rate is very high. Pupils are still experiencing the legacy of a narrow, academic and for many, inappropriate curriculum. The curriculum has been revised for current Year 10 pupils along three distinct pathways, including one which is a more vocational route. A wider range of vocational courses is on offer for pupils to develop work-related skills relevant to their intended future career. There are some limitations to the curriculum offered for design and technology and computing, however. The small number of most-able pupils do not have the options of taking triple science and two languages at GCSE.

The structure of the school day has been revised to ensure a similar timetable across Telford Langley and Telford Park. This provides some flexibility for staff to work interchangeably across the two schools. Setting arrangements in core and foundation subjects are based on pupil outcomes in core subjects. Pupils are set in the same group for all of their core subjects, English, mathematics and science (in part due to the limitations of a small teaching staff) even if they may be struggling in one of the subjects. The same system applies to setting for foundation subjects.

Improvements in behaviour have led to the school resorting less to arrangements for pupils attending classes out of lessons because of their behaviour. 'The Bridge' provides a way of reintegrating pupils gradually through an increasingly mainstream timetable. There is a significant programme of intervention for pupils to catch up with their literacy which takes place for a short period of time out of class daily. This has resulted in pupils making rapid gains in their reading ages.

The education advisory board (EAB) is rigorous in evaluating the work of senior leaders. It has ensured it is fulfilling its duty to hold leaders to account for safeguarding and has arranged for an external audit to be carried out. The EAB is thorough in its performance management systems, checking evidence thoroughly before agreeing to any pay awards.

The school ensures that arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies,

procedures and training records are up to date. Staff are vigilant in ensuring pupils are kept safe.

The changes of leadership for special educational needs still require more time to see the impact of strategies and training delivered. School information shows an improving position of outcomes and attendance for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities from a very low starting point. The number of pupils on the special educational needs register is very high. There are gaps in the information the school is required to publish on its website about special educational needs, including the school's evaluation of the effectiveness of the provision made for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Where pupils for whom English is an additional language have been in the school since primary school, they do very well. However, the school is struggling to adapt to the recent older new arrivals admitted late in key stage 4 with very little English. Some training has been very provided recently through the local authority to ensure a key link in each department, but there is not yet sufficient strategic oversight of this at a senior level.

The school works closely with a careers advice company to provide interviews for all Year 10 and 11 pupils. Links have been established with local post-16 providers and local employers. There are opportunities for pupils to visit these settings and for providers to come to assemblies. There is an 'Engage' programme for most-able pupils with the local Wolverhampton University. Last year, almost all Year 10 pupils were involved in work experience. Younger pupils indicated they have received little guidance so far, although careers have been covered in assemblies, in personal, social and health education lessons and through the school's vertical tutoring arrangements. To encourage high aspirations, a noticeboard displays the destinations of former students who have gone on to university to study, for example law and engineering.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers are now starting to make more use of information on pupils' previous outcomes to plan work. In mathematics, for example, teachers plan well for pupils' different starting points and abilities within sets. As a result of the legacy of previous weak teaching, however, even pupils in higher sets have significant gaps in their mathematical knowledge and understanding still to be addressed.

Pupils in lessons seen were engaged with their learning and showed interest in the activities they were doing. There are good relations between staff and pupils. Classrooms are calm, orderly environments. Pupils are less dependent on adult support. Pupils are given choices in their lessons about the level of challenge or the extent of support they feel they need. Teaching assistants are no longer stuck rigidly working one to one with pupils in lessons. The effectiveness of how well they are deployed by teachers, however, is still variable, with some acting as an extra

pair of hands rather than with any specific focus for their intervention and questioning.

Teachers' assessment and predictions for GCSE 2016 proved to be overgenerous so that pupils did not achieve as well as expected. In too many instances, including in science, if teachers want to know if the class has understood a concept or key word they ask a volunteer a question or target a pupil to answer. If the reply is correct, teachers assume that everyone has got it and move on to the next stage in learning. Pupils are now used to assessing their own work and that of their peers.

The extent to which teachers conform to the school's policy on marking and feedback is still very varied. Pupils spoken to said they knew how well they were doing. However, work in pupils' books indicates that the school's policy is not consistently applied, so pupils are not clear from written feedback how they can improve their work. Teachers do not consistently pick up on pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes in their writing.

There is a strong focus in key stage 3 on developing pupils' literacy skills in reading. Many pupils join from primary school or as mid-year admissions with very low levels of literacy. A daily silent reading session, including for teachers, is engaging pupils with reading regularly and often. They reported a wide choice of suitable books in the library. Pupils carry out an assessment when they have finished each book.

Teachers have limited strategies to support recent arrivals who are new to learning English, other than by issuing them with an electronic translator. These pupils often face the same work as others in class which has not been adapted according to their proficiency in English or starting points in the subjects, some of which they may not have studied before.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils spoken to confirmed that behaviour has improved over time. They felt that improvements coincided with the new building, uniform and name of school in September 2015. They find the new behaviour policy, set out with a series of consequences, easy to follow so that they have a clear understanding of what is and is not acceptable behaviour towards staff and other pupils. Pupils spoken to said that they understood the rewards and sanctions procedures well. Clear rewards are also in place.

The recent staff questionnaire indicated a positive view of staff towards pupil behaviour. Lessons are orderly and calm, with well-established routines set by teachers. Expectations for behaviour are high and, in most cases, the behaviour policy is consistently applied. Pupils have positive attitudes in lessons. They know that their teachers care about them and want them to do well.

Pupils spoken to were confident that teachers would deal with any issues that arise.

They know that they can talk to their teachers if anything is worrying them. Pupils reported that they feel safe in all parts of the building and grounds. There is a heavy teacher presence around the school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe through cyber bullying and e-safety lessons.

Closer monitoring of behaviour, attendance and punctuality has led to improvements in all of these areas. The rate of attendance and punctuality is up on this time last year overall and for different groups but still requires further improvement to reach national levels. Persistent absence remains stubbornly high, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is taking action to improve attendance and punctuality through personal action plans but it is too soon to see the impact of this.

Detentions have been reduced since last year. There has also been a fall in the very high level of fixed-term exclusions recorded in 2015. The number of recorded incidents of bullying has reduced. Pupils spoken to said that there was little bullying. Pupils' behaviour seen by inspectors in lessons and around the building and grounds was good.

The 'Bridge' facility is reintegrating pupils where they have had low levels of attendance or have been previously excluded for misbehaviour. The number of pupils needing to use this facility has reduced. They are set work by teachers but remain behind their peers as a result of missed work.

Outcomes for pupils

Since the last monitoring visit, provisional GCSE results for 2016 have been published. These indicate that attainment and progress for pupils, including most-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were significantly below average. Predictions in March 2016 were overgenerous. Outcomes in music, for example, seen by the school at the time of the last monitoring visit as a strength, were very low. No pupils gained the EBacc qualification (a GCSE at grades A* to C in all of English, mathematics, science, humanities and a modern foreign language) as a legacy of the previous curriculum. There are very few identified most-able pupils at Telford Park. The proportion of pupils who achieved the highest possible A*/A grades was very low.

Much of the teaching staff is new and inexperienced. Consequently, leaders are unable to demonstrate improvements in pupils' progress over a longer period of time other than this term.

Those pupils using The Bridge, who are out of normal lessons, are behind with their work but increasing the proportion of time they spend in normal lessons.

Pupils taken out of normal lessons to receive additional support with their reading

are making rapid gains. A structured approach to reading for those who are well below their reading age has led to rapid progress for those pupils on the programme. According to the school's figures, 94% of pupils on the programme have made 13 months' progress in their reading ages in five months.

There is limited evidence so far of diminishing the difference in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally over time. However, there are early signs of improvement in pupils currently in Year 10 and those in key stage 3.

The school recognises that there has been less impact of the pupil premium strategy on the progress of disadvantaged pupils who are middle-attaining. There have been relatively more rapid gains for most-able and lower-attaining pupils, where additional support and enrichment has been available.

Where pupils for whom English is an additional language previously attended primary school, they have made good progress over time. However, teachers are struggling to find effective strategies for the increasing number of recent arrivals new to English, especially older pupils going straight into GCSE subjects.

Outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were exceptionally low at GCSE in 2016. However, all of them went on to education, employment or training. The school was unable to provide details of destinations for other Year 11 leavers for this inspection visit.

External support

Links with other academy schools, especially Telford Langley, where there are joint governance and leadership arrangements, are providing additional capacity for leadership and the exchange of staff. A number of lead practitioners have now moved over to be based at Telford Park. Leaders have commissioned an external evaluation of aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding and pupil premium, and have received training from the local authority on English as an additional language.