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Mr Scott Burnside
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Burnside

Special measures monitoring inspection of Chaucer School

Following my visit with Marianne Young, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 28 and 29 March 2017, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 2016. 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2016.

- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - leaders develop an accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
 - improvement plans include sharp and precise outcomes throughout the year so that progress can be measured and leaders at all levels are held accountable for bringing about change
 - leaders at all levels are able to accurately evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through linking it closely with the impact it has on pupils' outcomes
 - subject leaders are accurate in judging how well pupils are achieving
 - all teachers follow the school marking and assessment policy so that all pupils are clear about what they need to do next and can act on teacher comments and advice
 - additional funding, including pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, is used effectively to reduce the gaps in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils needing to catch up.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - leaders establish where the best teaching is taking place and share this across the school
 - accurate assessment information is used across all year groups to enable teachers to plan work that fully meets the learning needs of different groups of pupils so that outcomes improve
 - teachers check carefully on the progress pupils are making so that they are clear about any pupils' misconceptions and misunderstandings
 - leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are closely linked to detailed review of the progress that pupils are making in all subjects
 - all teachers have high expectations for all pupils and only accept work that is presented to a high standard and completed.
- Improve behaviour and safety substantially by:
 - quickly tackling poor behaviour in lessons so that all pupils are able to work without interruption and are supported by teachers who consistently follow the school's behaviour and discipline system
 - further improving attendance and reducing the number of pupils excluded

from the school so that they are at least in line with national averages.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 28 March 2017 to 29 March 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, the chair of the local academy committee and representatives from the trust. Inspectors observed learning in lessons and scrutinised pupils' work jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited the school inclusion room and the on-site alternative provision.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes to staffing. There is a new executive headteacher and acting chief executive officer of Tapton School Academy Trust. A new vice-chair of the local academy committee has recently taken up post. Three long-term supply teachers are covering maternity leave and staff absence. The director of standards from the trust is based mainly in Chaucer School and is teaching some science.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Most leaders continue to have an accurate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders have developed a tracking system, which enables the effective analysis and evaluation of pupils' progress information. Through this, middle leaders have a greater knowledge of the performance of pupils in their subject areas and are now able to intervene earlier when pupils fall behind.

The headteacher and senior leaders keep an up-to-date development plan. Leaders evaluate actions for impact on improving the school. Leaders recognise that this needs to be more focused on pupils' progress.

Leaders are ensuring that most teachers are implementing the whole-school approach to teaching and learning effectively. However, leaders are not linking the quality of teaching to the progress that pupils are making. Leaders are currently making judgements about teaching and learning based on compliance and some of the most recent observations of teaching are too generous. This is leading to an overinflated view of the quality of teaching. Most leaders recognise that there is an explicit link between the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make.

Subject leaders are becoming increasingly accurate in making judgements about how well pupils are achieving. This is because they are standardising and moderating work with other schools across the trust. Through this, they are able to identify which pupils require intervention to enable them to make better progress.

Leaders are ensuring that funding for disadvantaged pupils is helping to improve their outcomes. This is more noticeable in Year 7 and Year 8, where differences in progress are diminishing in some subjects between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. All groups of pupils are making better progress than they were previously in these year groups. The spending of this funding is less successful in Years 10 and 11, where pupils' progress is not as strong, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Catch-up funding continues to support pupils in making better progress in literacy, but there has been little impact with numeracy, partly due to staffing issues, which have delayed the start of these interventions.

The local academy committee provides rigorous challenge to school leaders and to the trust. They are focused on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and they hold leaders to account well. They ensure that performance management is rigorous and links to pupils' progress.

Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding is effective. Staff are well trained and kept up to date with changes and important safeguarding information regularly. Records are well kept and comprehensive, detailing the impact and outcomes of support given to vulnerable pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The accuracy of assessments is improving across the school, but further work is needed to ensure that there is a consistent approach, for example in using pupil information to plan lessons. Where teaching is stronger, teachers make good use of assessment information and pupils' prior attainment to plan appropriate learning that challenges pupils and ensures that they achieve well.

Expectations of what pupils can achieve are being raised and this is reflected in the quality of work in some books. However, this remains inconsistent and, therefore, not all pupils are making the progress that they are capable of, particularly in key stage 4. Some teachers still accept incomplete or poorly presented work, although this is an improving picture from the previous monitoring visit in November 2016.

Current judgements made by school leaders about the quality of teaching are overinflated and there is a lack of clarity around what makes best practice. Most leaders recognise there is further work to do to increase the accuracy of this judgement. The trust have scheduled lead practitioners from across the trust to model and share best practice to improve the quality and evaluation of teaching and learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The new behaviour policy, centred on positive discipline, is improving pupils' behaviour. Low-level disruption is decreasing and pupils are aware of the consequences to their actions. Pupils recognise this and are pleased with the

system; however, pupils report that a small number of staff remain inconsistent in their use of the policy.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving. This is particularly apparent where teachers have high expectations. Pupils respond to this by making an effort with their work and responding to teacher comments. Overall, pupils want to do well.

Fixed-term exclusions remain high as boundaries for behaviour are firmly set and a small number of pupils are not responding well to this. The severity of incidents has decreased and pupils' use of foul or derogatory language towards teachers has dropped significantly. A high number of pupils are accessing the inclusion room as part of the support process to improve their behaviour.

Attendance remains a similar picture to the previous academic year and is below the national average. This is, in part, due to the number of fixed-term exclusions. Leaders are working on reducing these to improve attendance. Leaders are implementing a number of innovative strategies to improve attendance for all groups of pupils but it is too soon to see the impact of these strategies.

Punctuality has improved since the last academic year. More pupils are arriving to school on time. This is due to the rigorous system that is in place to ensure that pupils are punctual.

Outcomes for pupils

The progress that pupils make at key stage 3 is an improving picture, with pupils making better progress in most subjects, and standards are rising. Differences between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are beginning to diminish in Years 7 and 8. There is, however, much work to do at key stage 4 to ensure that pupils make better progress. Leaders and teachers know this and are implementing a number of interventions to support pupils. Progress has improved slightly from the previous monitoring visit in November. Attendance at interventions has increased significantly from the last academic year and is contributing to improving progress.

External support

The trust has increased the amount of support provided to the school following the appointment of an executive headteacher. There are regular meetings between the headteacher and executive headteacher, which ensure high levels of challenge and accountability. The trust have implemented support for middle leaders in science, modern foreign languages and mathematics, which is helping to improve leadership skills and drive up standards. Subject support is in place for humanities. Further work is taking place to ensure that lead practitioners from the trust work in Chaucer School to support the development of teaching and learning.