

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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12 May 2017

Ms Sharon Simpson  
Acting Headteacher  
The Baverstock Academy  
501 Bells Lane  
Druids Heath  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
B14 5TL

Dear Ms Simpson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Baverstock Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 25–26 April 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 2016.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

No statement of action or improvement plans were seen as the school is due to close on 31 August 2017.

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 academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children’s services for Birmingham. 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 that took place in October 2016.**

- With urgency, leaders need to work with the relevant agencies to ensure that a permanent structural solution is found for the school in order to:
  - secure the financial future for the school
  - take the strategic decisions concerning the future leadership and governance arrangements of the school
  - ensure that there is effective leadership at all levels, including for each subject taught and for special educational needs, English as an additional language, most able and disadvantaged pupils
  - appoint high-quality and well-trained teaching and support staff
  - refurbish the building.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
  - teachers' planning takes account of pupils' starting points and previous learning
  - activities engage and stimulate pupils' interest and are relevant to their needs
  - teachers are well trained to provide the appropriate challenge for most-able pupils (including those who are also disadvantaged) and meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language
  - teachers apply the behaviour policy in lessons rigorously, fairly and consistently.
- Raise outcomes for all pupils, including those who are most able, disadvantaged, have special educational needs and/or disabilities or speak English as an additional language, by ensuring that leaders at all levels:
  - are united in their drive and ambition to raise standards for pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form
  - set high expectations of teachers and pupils in order to create a positive ethos for learning in lessons
  - hold teachers more closely to account for outcomes for different groups of pupils
  - spend additional funding appropriately and target it effectively at those for whom it is intended
  - promote regular attendance for pupils effectively, especially for those who speak English as an additional language.

An external review of governance and an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken once the future of the school has been determined in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 25 April 2017 to 26 April 2017**

### **Evidence**

The purpose of the visit was primarily to check the safety and welfare of pupils during this transitional stage before closure. The inspector met with the acting headteacher, other leaders and members of staff, the school support adviser, a member of the trust, two groups of pupils and a member of Birmingham South and City College. The chair of trustees was unavailable to meet during the monitoring visit. The inspector conducted two learning walks with the headteacher, looked at pupils' books and observed behaviour in lessons, during lesson changes, at lunchtime and breaktimes, in an assembly, and a fire drill. He scrutinised information relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, the Department for Education (DfE) confirmed in March 2017 that the school will close on 31 August 2017. The executive principal, who had been absent during the last inspection, did not return and resigned during the Autumn term 2016. The chief executive officer, who had previously been interim executive principal, left in March 2017. The acting headteacher left at Easter 2017. The majority of heads of subject including English, mathematics and science have left the school and not been replaced. Heads of department remain in modern languages, music, religious education and physical education. The head of the sixth form has also left. A number of other staff have left. The current acting headteacher had been in post for one day at the time of the monitoring visit. The number of pupils on roll has now fallen to under 400 as pupils secure places in other settings. The interim academy board (IAB) have now merged with the Learn, Engage, Achieve, Progress (LEAP) Academy Trust to form a new board of trustees to oversee the closure of the school. A new chair of trustees was appointed in March 2017. A school adviser from a local academy trust is working closely with the school over transition arrangements for staff and pupils.

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

In the absence of finding a sponsor, leaders and members of the trust recommended closure as the school does not have a sustainable future. This was confirmed in writing by the DfE on 30 March 2017.

During the period of uncertainty, and since the confirmation of closure, the school has continued to experience the loss of senior and middle leaders, teachers and pupils, reducing the school's capacity to improve further. Staff who leave are replaced by qualified temporary cover teachers, most of whom are on a fixed-term contract until the end of the school year. The pupil premium funding has continued to be spent on offsetting debts although special educational needs funding has been

ring-fenced and protected for its intended purpose. The school has retained leadership of special educational needs and English as an additional language.

The building remains dilapidated with no prospect of refurbishment before the school closes. Leaders and members of the trust have carried out checks to ensure that the building is safe and secure. No decision has been made over the future of the building and the site.

Since the merger of the IAB and LEAP academy trust, trustees are now working together with a common purpose to secure the pupils' futures for next year. The merger into one body has also ensured that the previous lack of communication has gone and been replaced by a spirit of cooperation and trust. Members of the trust are also working closely with the school's current leaders. The new trust has been in place for too short a space of time to demonstrate its impact, however.

Staff who are still in the school are demonstrating a high level of dedication and commitment. They are striving to ensure the best interests of the pupils who remain in Baverstock through the transition arrangements for next year. They are working tirelessly with the local authority and other schools and colleges to secure places for all Year 7 to 10 pupils for September 2017. Transition plans are in place for those pupils on the special educational needs register who have education, health and care plans.

Safeguarding arrangements, which were a strength at the time of the last inspection, continue to be rigorous for those pupils in school. There has been continuity of key staff. Policies and procedures are up to date and other staff spoken to were clear they knew what to do if a safeguarding incident were to occur. Referrals have been dealt with in a timely fashion and good relationships exist with external agencies. The school meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding.

Designated leaders are well trained and know their pupils and families well. Arrangements are in place to transfer information, including for the most vulnerable pupils, to the school or college they will be attending. However, as things stand the wealth of knowledge and relationships these staff have concerning some of the most vulnerable pupils will be no longer available from 31 August, including the bilingual home-school links for pupils learning English as an additional language.

After the school closes, questions remain about what will happen where pupils who have secured a place at another setting do not attend at the start of the Autumn term and the receiving setting will not have established relationships with the families. Absence is already exceptionally high for pupils learning English as an additional language, especially those of Roma and Romanian background, almost all of whom are persistently absent. There is a very high risk of some of these pupils disappearing from the system without secure ongoing transitional arrangements in place after 31 August 2017.

External reviews of governance and the pupil premium have not taken place in the light of the school's plan for closure.

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

Teaching remains inadequate with many established teachers having left including many heads of departments. There is an increasing reliance on qualified teaching staff on fixed-term contracts. However, teaching has been stabilised. Those temporary staff who had displayed ineffective or inconsistent behaviour management have been removed to be replaced with staff able to manage classrooms and ensure a calm and orderly environment. Pupils across the school have not made enough progress as a result of ineffective teaching, significant disruptions to teaching personnel and a high turnover of temporary staff. There are reduced opportunities for staff development.

In lessons seen, teachers, including those who only started after Easter, managed classes successfully with lesson plans in place. Pupils were engaged and for the most part interested in their learning. Expectations for behaviour and routines were consistently applied and pupils complied. Teachers maintained positive relationships with pupils. They reinforced their expectations while at the same time, through their conduct and language, avoided confrontation. Where staff are new to classes or teaching groups have been rearranged in the light of falling numbers, teaching does not consistently take account of pupils' starting points and previous learning. As a result, most-able pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language do not get their specific learning needs met.

In languages and music lessons, pupils became animated as they took interest in the impact of music on advertisements or talking about their leisure interests in French. Elsewhere, lessons proceeded at a slower pace.

Where teachers knew their pupils well they were able to ask targeted questions appropriately.

The quality of teaching has remained stable for the very small number of pupils who have remained in the sixth form and as a result most are on track to achieve their expected outcomes. In key stages 3 and 4 pupils are falling far short of the targets set for them.

Work in pupils' books was poorly presented and teachers' expectations of presentation were low.

According to pupils spoken to in both key stages 3 and 4, teaching was not good in science. The school has made a number of appointments over Easter, a number of whom had only just started the day before the monitoring visit, in order to stabilise teaching in science.

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

Leaders' and teachers' energies have been concentrated on ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils in school and ensuring stability in the classroom as other leaders and teachers leave.

They have achieved this successfully. Pupils spoken to were unanimous in saying that they felt safe in school. Bullying and offensive name-calling were very rare and behaviour in lessons had improved.

The school has created three new posts for 'ethos and standards' to support pupils during the transition.

The falling roll has meant that teaching groups are now very small and pupils spoken to said this has led to a significant improvement on behaviour.

However, the rate of attendance, including for disadvantaged pupils, has continued to fall and rates of persistent absence remain exceptionally high despite a marginal improvement. A high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language are persistently absent. A small number of those who live a long way from school have effectively stopped attending although the school continues to check their well-being and safety on a regular basis. The transport which they had been previously offered when they joined school was no longer available. Attendance for pupils on the special educational needs register has improved and is now just below the national average for all pupils.

In lessons seen, pupils behaved well and remained on task. Occasionally, pupils switched off or were not listening when a teacher was talking but there were no incidents of disruptive behaviour seen. Pupils were sometimes late for lessons but this did not disrupt the flow of the activities for others as they quickly settled.

Similarly, in the playground during lunch and in the dining hall pupils conducted themselves well. They were orderly in the corridors between lessons, walking to and from assembly and attending a fire drill. They were polite, courteous and friendly, although at times subdued and quiet.

There has been a small number of permanent exclusions in 2016 and 2017 after a period of no permanent exclusions previously.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Leaders have been unable to have an impact on raising standards. Outcomes continue to remain low with little prospect for older pupils of recovering the lost ground caused by ineffective teaching. Results in the recent mock examinations for Year 11 pupils were exceptionally low and indicate that overall pupils have not



made enough progress in their learning. A similar picture exists in other year groups. Groups, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils who speak English as an additional language and most-able pupils including those who are disadvantaged have all made inadequate progress. Teachers have not been held sufficiently to account for outcomes for pupil groups. Funding has not focused on improving outcomes for other groups of pupils including those eligible for the pupil premium and those who need to catch up in literacy and numeracy in Year 7. Where spending has been ring-fenced for special educational needs it has not led to a measurable improvement in outcomes for these pupils.

There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere now in lessons which has led to pupils engaging in their learning but it is too little too late to impact on outcomes.

There are just eight pupils left in the sixth form. Those taking vocational courses have already successfully achieved their expected outcomes as a result of stability in staffing.

### **External support**

The school is working closely in partnership with the local authority and a local academy trust to ensure smooth transitional arrangements for staff and pupils.

A local college has offered places to all pupils currently in Years 9 and 10 with an assurance that wherever possible pupils currently in Year 10 can continue with their GCSE courses next year at the college.

The school is receiving external support for staffing, finance and legal issues. The Education and Skills Funding Agency has ensured that the school can pay staffing salaries and costs up to 31 August 2017.