

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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18 July 2017

Mr Keith Howard  
Headteacher  
St Dunstan's School  
Wells Road  
Glastonbury  
Somerset  
BA6 9BY

Dear Mr Howard

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Dunstan's School**

Following my visit with David New, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 4 and 5 July 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy 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
- the academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose
- the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve the culture of safeguarding in the school by ensuring that:
  - governors are appropriately trained so they check the monitoring of the school's safeguarding procedures effectively to be sure that all pupils are safe
  - staff safeguarding training is up to date and recorded accurately.
- Raise outcomes for pupils by checking that all teachers:
  - pose effective questions that check pupils' learning, develop their understanding and extend their thinking
  - follow the school's policy by providing pupils with effective feedback so that they know how well they are doing and understand how to improve their work
  - give pupils, particularly the most able, work that challenges them
  - develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Raise attendance by:
  - improving systems for monitoring absence
  - working effectively with parents and other agencies to reduce the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 4 to 5 July 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the chief executive officer (CEO) and the deputy CEO of Midsomer Norton Schools' Partnership, the partnership's leader for mathematics, senior and middle leaders, support staff, pupils and two members of the governing body. Inspectors also reviewed pupils' work in lessons and observed pupils at break- and lunchtimes.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection in December 2016, two middle leaders have been promoted to assistant headteacher posts. Leaders have also appointed a new pastoral leader. The local governing body has been strengthened by the appointment of additional governors, and a new chair has been appointed. Some members of the interim executive board have stepped down, as the local governing body takes on more of the governance responsibilities at St Dunstan's.

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

The headteacher leads the school with drive, determination and ambition. He has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has prioritised actions effectively to improve pupils' well-being and their academic achievement. The expanded leadership team has added capacity to continue the positive journey of improvement. However, a number of these leaders hold multiple roles, such as also being a head of faculty, which limits the time available to fully carry out their senior leadership roles. The partnership has ensured that additional leadership capacity will be in place from September 2017.

Leaders and governors have invested heavily in the school site. The buildings have been substantially refurbished and pupils report that these changes have made the school a pleasant place to learn. They particularly value the sporting facilities, which have been enhanced further. The security of the site has been a high priority and the changes made ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Staff have been suitably trained and are well aware of pupils who are potentially at risk of harm. They pay particular attention to these pupils' well-being. Checks made of staff before they start employment are rigorous. Governors have undertaken training in safeguarding and carried out checks on some records. There is now a need to fully test systems to eliminate any remaining weaknesses; in particular, by sharpening the record-keeping of child protection files and by raising pupils' awareness to the risks they may face from radicalisation and extremism.

The vast majority of systems that are now in place were introduced earlier this academic year. These systems have ensured that standards have risen, attitudes to learning are more positive and the need for sanctions has fallen. However, these improvements are from a low starting point and are still in the early days of implementation. In some aspects, leaders have been slightly generous in their evaluation and while the improvements can be seen, they are not yet being consistently implemented across the school and so are yet to have the impact required to fully secure the improvements needed.

While staff know the pupils well, there is a need for leaders to analyse more sharply their records to identify any trends or patterns in pupils' social and personal development, including their behaviour. This will allow leaders to plan more strategically so that any future changes have the maximum level of impact.

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

Leaders have brought about significant improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous monitoring inspection. The most able pupils show very positive attitudes to their learning, routines are well established and teachers ensure that no time is wasted. The feedback they receive is helping this group of pupils make strong progress, as any misconceptions are quickly corrected and their understanding is deepened. This is less apparent for middle- and lower-ability pupils, particularly the boys. Some pupils do not routinely fully complete their tasks, make corrections or improve their work. The quality of the presentation of work by these pupils remains variable.

The focus on improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar is resulting in better quality writing. However, other aspects of developing pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum are in their infancy. Due to staffing changes, the plans to develop pupils' mathematical skills across the curriculum have been limited.

Pupils' engagement in their learning is generally strong. Pupils are able to apply their knowledge, for example when designing products. Activities are designed that have real purpose, with an identifiable consumer. This adds interest to the projects and so pupils behave well in lessons and produce high quality work.

Assessment procedures are robust, with tracking and monitoring systems for academic attainment in place. Working with colleagues from across the partnership, teachers are able to confirm the accuracy of their assessments of pupils' progress.

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

The school has a calm atmosphere, where pupils show respect for one another and for adults. Pupils have strong, positive relationships with their teachers and other members of staff. They rightly have trust and confidence in them.

Staff positively promote equality and diversity across the school. Pupils talk about memorable assemblies, where they learn about keeping themselves safe from a wide range of risks and about lifestyles that may be different to their own.

Leaders have ensured particularly good support for pupils who have mental health needs. Professionals work with a number of pupils during the school day to help them manage their own specific needs. The school makes effective use of alternative provision for a very small number of pupils. They receive timely reports from the provider about pupils' progress and their attendance. However, leaders do not monitor these pupils as closely as those who attend the school. As a result, they are not always aware quickly enough when attendance declines or progress slows.

While behaviour overall is improving, it is notable that the number of incidents of misbehaviour by disadvantaged pupils is significantly higher than other pupils. Exclusions are falling and relatively few pupils are repeatedly being excluded.

Attendance is improving but remains below the figure seen typically for secondary schools. A range of strategies are in place, including the involvement of the partnership's in-house education welfare officer and the local authority, to improve this further. For disadvantaged pupils, attendance remains lower than their classmates and markedly lower than historic levels seen for other pupils nationally.

The school has a considerably higher number of pupils who do not attend school regularly than most secondary schools. This number is falling, but the reduction is too slow. A number of these pupils have been taken on holiday by their parents during term-time and this has been detrimental to their progress in the subjects they are studying. In many subjects, pupils do not routinely catch up on work they miss when they are absent.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Overall, pupils are making better progress than they have done historically in most subjects. The difference between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates remains and while work to reduce this is under way, it is still early days. Therefore, the differences are not diminishing quickly enough.

In some year groups, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to achieve less well than their classmates. While their social and emotional development is well catered for, their academic progress is not given the same emphasis and so they do not achieve as highly as they should.

Teachers' work to improve pupils' literacy and mathematical skills is limited in subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils are able to articulate their understanding well, but some pupils, mainly boys, struggle to reflect this in their writing.

### **External support**

St Dunstan's School continues to receive support from the Midsomer Norton Schools' Partnership. This is particularly effective in the sharing of resources and staff training. The CEO provides high-level challenge and support, particularly to senior leaders. Governors also make good use of an independent school improvement consultant, who provides detailed reports on the progress the school is making, and a separate consultant, who reviews safeguarding arrangements. Both consultants provide assurances to the local governing body and the trust's directors.

At the first monitoring inspection, the academy's improvement plan was not fit for purpose. Leaders and governors swiftly redrafted the improvement plan with very clear, well considered actions that will bring about rapid improvement. The plan is well understood by members of staff and governors, who have the responsibility to implement the actions and monitor their effectiveness. Senior leaders and governors keep a close eye on the improvement plan. As a result, many of the actions have been completed and the impact is beginning to be seen.

Trust-wide provision for supporting newly qualified teachers is now in place and additional leadership capacity has been made available by the partnership to coach and mentor new colleagues. As a result, leaders may appoint newly qualified teachers.