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18 September 2017

Mr Andy Pugh  
Principal  
Castle Hall Academy  
Richard Thorpe Avenue  
Crowlees Road  
Mirfield  
West Yorkshire  
WF14 9PH

Dear Mr Pugh

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Castle Hall Academy**

Following my visit with Mary Lanovy-Taylor and Tricia Head, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 18–19 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 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 November 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.

The trust’s statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school’s action plan is fit for purpose.

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 acting chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Hayter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so pupils make good progress by:
  - making sure that leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching give greater weight to the progress all groups of pupils are making in relation to their starting points
  - ensuring that self-evaluation is accurate and informs whole-school and departmental improvement plans
  - improving the quality of performance management targets so that they sharply focus on improving pupils' progress
  - making sure that middle leaders effectively check and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and hold teachers accountable for the progress pupils are making
  - improving the curriculum for pupils attending the learning support unit and making sure that those who attend off-site provision are following suitable accredited pathways
  - ensuring that the curriculum equips all pupils for life in modern Britain
  - ensuring that governors fulfil their statutory duties, making sure that all school policies are reviewed, amended and ratified in a timely manner and these are reflected on the school website
  - making sure that governors and external support provide greater levels of challenge and scrutiny on the impact leaders and managers are having in rapidly tackling weaknesses.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - making sure that all teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can do
  - ensuring that teachers make best use of pupil assessment information to deliver teaching over time that is sufficiently engaging and challenging, especially for the most able pupils
  - checking that teachers consistently tackle pupils' weaknesses in literacy
  - ensuring that pupils understand clearly how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve, in line with the school's marking and assessment policy
  - making sure that successful strategies to improve teaching are more effectively shared and adopted to improve teaching.

- Improve the behaviour and attendance of pupils by:
  - making sure that all teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour both in and out of lessons
  - carefully analysing why different groups of pupils are not attending the school regularly and devising suitable strategies to improve their attendance levels
  - devising further ways to give pupils the confidence to report all instances of bullying so that these can be successfully addressed
  - ensuring adequate staff supervision at lunchtimes to make sure that all pupils use exits and entrances appropriately.
- Improve the quality of child protection records by:
  - making sure that there are clear timelines for when actions have to be taken
  - ensuring that greater attention is paid to checking that actions taken by the school and other professionals and agencies are having the desired impact.
- Improve the quality of careers information, advice and guidance so that younger pupils are better informed and more confident about the choices available to them at key stage 4.

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 school'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 first monitoring inspection on 18–19 July 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the senior leadership team and other leaders, groups of teaching assistants, the acting chair of the governing body and five other governors, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils from every year group as well as speaking informally with pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes. An inspector visited Pivot, one of the two alternative provisions currently used by the school.

During this first monitoring inspection, inspectors focused on the areas for improvement linked directly to the effectiveness of leadership and management, pupils' attendance and behaviour, and child protection.

### **Context**

Since the inspection in November 2016, two assistant principals have left the school. The two vice-principals have swapped responsibilities and a new temporary assistant principal will join the team in September. Eight other members of the teaching staff are leaving the school at the end of the summer term, including the head of geography and the head of science.

In addition, the chair of the governing body has resigned. The vice-chair is currently the acting chair of the governing body.

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

The principal, senior leaders and the governing body were disappointed at the outcome of the inspection in November 2016. Unfortunately, leaders have not fully taken on board the very clear messages from the last inspection. Leaders' lack of attention to the progress pupils make from their different starting points and their overgenerous evaluation of the impact of teaching, learning and assessment remain key issues for the school.

Leaders responded to the inspection feedback and subsequent report with substantial amounts of activity and work. There is no doubt that they are committed to improving the school's performance. Their plans to improve the school are fit for purpose in that they identify timely actions and activities that are likely to improve the school. However, their response to the advice given in Ofsted's evaluation of their post-inspection action plan has not been helpful. The advice was to sharpen the progress measures used to track the impact of the plan. Leaders' decision to use pupils' attainment as the main performance measure, despite having pupils' progress information available, continues to hamper the school's progress. The chosen measure does not give leaders the information they need about the progress of different groups of pupils from their different starting points. As a result,

leaders, including governors, do not accurately track how all their activity is improving the school, particularly in the areas identified at the last inspection. Over the course of this inspection, leaders demonstrated a deeper understanding of the need to use the information they collect about the progress pupils make. However, given that the previous inspection was in November 2016, the lack of timeliness in recognising and implementing the necessary measures to define how the school is addressing the areas for improvement has hindered the effectiveness of leaders' work thus far.

Leaders and staff at all levels have introduced an enormous range of new initiatives and systems. However, they have not routinely paused to evaluate the difference the initiatives have made to the progress pupils make. Leaders agree that the process they intended to implement in September is too focused on checking if teachers are doing what they have been asked to do, rather than evaluating the impact of their work on pupils' learning. Leaders have committed to amend the system so that reviews of work in pupils' books and visits to lessons focus on how they evaluate gains in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.

Leaders measure pupils' progress based on tests and teachers' assessments in English, mathematics and science for Years 7, 8 and 9 but they do not routinely analyse the information they collect. This means that sometimes a decline in pupils' progress is not acted on as swiftly as it could be.

Since the last inspection, leaders have made steps towards improving the curriculum in the learning support unit. The new leader has a much clearer view of what is needed to ensure that pupils make good progress. This is because the leader has a clearer understanding of the social, emotional and mental health needs of the substantial proportion of pupils who use the unit. The leader recognises that more needs to be done to ensure that pupils' academic progress is maintained while they are placed in the unit.

Leaders responded promptly to the recommendation for an external review of governance. The governing body has responded to the review recommendations and changed much about the way it supports and challenges leaders. The changes mean increased commitment to attend more meetings and a new system for following up the actions agreed at meetings. Governors have also agreed a systematic method for keeping up to date with their statutory duties. However, crucially, governors have not always applied sufficient diligence to the way they evaluate the guidance they are given through the external reviews and advice they have commissioned. For example, they accepted an inaccurate local authority review of the checks made on staff before they are appointed, without fully understanding for themselves the current requirements. This gave them a false sense of security about how well they meet their statutory duties. Overall, the current governance arrangements have not ensured that leaders are taking effective action quickly enough for the removal of special measures by the end of autumn 2018.

The governing body's response to the pupil premium review has not been effective enough. Although the review was commissioned and conducted in a timely fashion, governors and leaders have not acted on the recommendations quickly enough. Leaders say they are waiting for the temporary assistant principal to take up post in September. This decision means that pupils have potentially lost four months of the increased benefit of the additional funding to which they are entitled. Consequently, their attendance has not improved significantly and the school's information about the progress disadvantaged pupils make shows far too much variability in these pupils' progress.

At the last inspection, safeguarding was judged to be effective. However, inspectors identified areas for improvement in the way the school records whether agreed actions to help pupils have taken place and if the actions have made the intended difference to pupils. A new system has been introduced and a vice-principal is now responsible for leading the work. The system is much more robust.

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

Leaders have undertaken training from an external consultant to improve the accuracy of their evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders' information shows that because of the training there is a slightly closer match between their judgements about teaching and their record of the progress pupils make. Leaders recognise that more needs to be done in this key area of work so they are able to provide teachers with effective feedback and support to improve their practice.

There remains significant variability in the effectiveness of teaching over time. Teachers do not all have high expectations for pupils, particularly boys. As a result, overall, pupils produce insufficient work of a good standard. Teachers have access to a range of information about pupils' progress but the information is not used consistently enough to inform their planning. Leaders are not confident in the accuracy of some teachers' assessments.

Leaders have appointed three of the more effective teachers within the staff as lead practitioners. These appointments have been made recently and their planned work will start in earnest in September.

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

Overall attendance has not improved enough and remains below the attendance rates in most other schools. Senior leaders have not tackled the underlying causes of the poor attendance of some groups of pupils.

Leaders do not routinely analyse the information they collect so they do not understand the link between pupils' behaviour, attendance and progress. Leaders'

lack of analysis means that they do not always tackle the right issues for different groups of pupils in a timely or effective way.

Leaders have introduced a new approach to the school's anti-bullying work. Pupils appreciate the new online reporting system and most said they know about how to use the system. Pupils are confident that, since January 2017, behaviour in and around school has improved and that staff respond when they need help and support. However, inspectors' observations of pupils' behaviour, particularly as they move around the site between lessons, confirms that some pupils' behaviour is sometimes too physical and disrespectful to other pupils, staff and visitors. Some staff do not respond with sufficient authority to pupils' poor behaviour to bring about immediate or lasting change.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Leaders' information about the progress pupils are making from their different starting points, in all year groups and over a range of subjects, remains weak.

Leaders have significantly increased the proportion of Year 11 pupils entered for the European Computer Driving Licence qualification. Governors' minutes indicate that this is to increase the overall progress measure for the cohort, particularly for the most able pupils. However, this course is not challenging enough for many pupils.

### **External support**

The local authority has increased the level of support it provides to the school since the inspection in November 2016. Some of the work has challenged leaders and has directed them to increase the pace of change. For example, the local authority has challenged leaders to respond more urgently to the pupil premium review. However, some of the advice has not been accurate enough to be helpful to the school.

Other support commissioned by the governing body through external consultants, a national leader of education and other local trusts has had varying degrees of successful impact.

### **Further actions**

Leaders intend to amend the post-Ofsted action plan to incorporate the advice received from the various reviews and impact of the actions taken so far. Leaders have agreed to share the revised plan with the monitoring Her Majesty's Inspector before the end of September 2017.