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Mr Tom Ashley
Balby Carr Community Academy
Weston Road
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Doncaster
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Dear Mr Ashley

Special measures monitoring inspection of Balby Carr Community Academy

Following my visit with Gina White, Her Majesty's Inspector, and David Pridding, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 19 to 20 September 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 April 2017.

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 not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not 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 chair of the interim executive committee, the regional

schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Doncaster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Darren Stewart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2017

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, so that it is at least consistently good to enable all groups of pupils to achieve well, by ensuring that:
 - staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teachers use assessment information effectively to plan work that matches pupils' needs and abilities, including the most able pupils, and challenges them to make good progress
 - questioning is used skilfully to check pupils' learning and to deepen understanding
 - teachers provide sufficient guidance to help pupils attain a good standard of work
 - pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their literacy and mathematical skills across subjects
 - the pace of learning is effective for pupils to gain good knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Urgently improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by ensuring that:
 - there is a rapid reduction in pupils' absence so that pupils' safety is assured and opportunities for learning are not missed
 - pupils arrive punctually to school and to lessons
 - improvements in behaviour are secured quickly to reduce the high levels of exclusion and enable all pupils to feel safe
 - school leaders take action to eradicate persistent low-level disruption in class
 - pupils take pride in their work and develop good attitudes to learning
 - pupils treat each other and adults with respect at all times.
- Improve the effectiveness of the sixth form by ensuring that:
 - students make consistently good progress across a wide range of subjects, especially academic subjects
 - greater opportunities are provided for students to contribute to their studies through independent learning skills
 - a greater proportion of students continue their studies to full completion
 - there is increased recruitment, especially from the school's Year 11 pupils.

- Swiftly improve the impact of leadership, including governance and the multi-academy trust, by making sure that:
 - safeguarding procedures are effective and all staff are knowledgeable about all aspects of child protection and keeping children safe in school
 - all senior leaders and subject leaders are thorough in checking the quality of teaching and learning so that they have an accurate view of the performance of the school and subject areas
 - effective use is made of the pupil premium funding and special educational needs funding to ensure that learning and behaviour are at least good for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - senior leaders and subject leaders ensure that teachers follow the school's policy for marking, feedback and assessment
 - middle leaders make sure that teachers consistently apply the school's behaviour policy to eradicate low-level disruption in class and improve conduct around the school
 - teachers and leaders are held to account through a rigorous performance management system
 - the curriculum is well taught across a wide range of subjects, especially English and mathematics, to make sure that pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education
 - work across the curriculum leads to positive attitudes to learning and strengthens pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - governors fulfil their statutory duties, including making sure that the school's website is compliant
 - the multi-academy trust and governors challenge and support the school more effectively to ensure that the overall effectiveness of the school improves.

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 19 to 20 September

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including the trust's statement of action and the school improvement plan. Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and groups of staff and pupils. Discussions were also held with the chair of the interim executive committee and the interim chief executive officer for Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT).

Context

Since the school was last inspected in April 2017, there have been considerable changes to staffing: 20 members of staff left the school at the end of August. Two new deputy headteachers and one additional assistant headteacher were appointed. As a result of these senior appointments, the senior leadership team has been restructured and responsibilities realigned to focus on the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. In addition, 14 teachers and five pastoral and support staff have also taken up new roles.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school has made a slow start to tackling the areas for improvement. The turbulence in staffing throughout the summer term hampered attempts to establish consistency in teaching and engage pupils in learning. Poor behaviour and very high rates of exclusion continued and school attendance plummeted to the lowest it has ever been. The headteacher is well aware of what needs to improve but has had limited strategic support from the interim executive committee, or guidance from the trust, to produce an action plan that is fit for purpose, or to establish the necessary systems and practices throughout the school to support critical self-evaluation.

The trust has not produced a statement of action or improvement plan that meets requirements. They have not made any changes in response to the detailed feedback provided by Her Majesty's Inspector to their initial plan. The trust has retained oversight of governance through its interim executive committee. However, it has not used its position to support or challenge effectively. Minutes from the interim executive committee's meetings do not demonstrate challenge in relation to the strategic direction and improvement of this school. Discussions and questioning are limited and no actions relating to improvements have been taken. A review of governance, as recommended in the previous inspection report, has not been undertaken. The school's website continues to not comply with statutory requirements. Key policies, including for safeguarding, are out of date and do not meet the statutory requirements of governance.

The curriculum has been reviewed by the headteacher and he has taken urgent action to address major weaknesses, especially at key stage 4 and key stage 5. The curriculum is now more focused on developing pupils' wider skills, for example in literacy. Pupils are now guided into 'pathways' that aim to meet their needs and are designed with the intention of preparing them for their future aspirations. However, at this point it is too early to evaluate the impact of the changes in the curriculum at key stages 4 and 5. The headteacher now plans to review and evaluate the curriculum on offer at key stage 3.

An external review of the use of the pupil premium funding, completed in July 2017, provides very little guidance to support the school's work. The action plan to improve this important area of the school's work is not insightful enough. The plan needs refining so that middle leaders take a leading role in their subject areas too. Senior leaders acknowledge that there remains a lot of work still to do to improve the opportunities and chances of disadvantaged pupils who attend the school.

Middle leaders are developing as they begin to recognise their roles in improving standards and raising expectations. Middle leaders are not yet evaluating the quality of teaching well enough in their departments to identify where further improvements need to be made. As a result of this, they are not effecting change as rapidly as they could be. As a group, they have made a slow start in holding colleagues to account in their departmental areas. While the quality of middle leadership is variable, as a group they believe they are now able to make a difference and their enthusiasm to effect change is evident. This academic year, they have experienced their first examination evaluation meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders. This demonstrates further how senior leaders are now holding this group of leaders to account and working with them to get to grips with the strengths and weaknesses of each department.

The headteacher has worked quickly to appoint new staff. As a result, the school began the term with a full complement of staff and almost no temporary teachers. Consequently, staffing in mathematics and science is now stable. He has also taken clear and firm action to protect pupils. Pupils no longer leave the school site at lunchtimes.

Following the previous inspection, senior leaders have taken decisive actions to improve site safety and standards of behaviour, and to instil a culture of high expectations for both staff and pupils. As a result of these actions, pupils say that they now feel safe and are experiencing less disruption in their lessons. Teachers feel supported by senior leaders and are now managing behaviour in lessons well and with consistency, adhering to the school's newly implemented practices.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders have introduced a new planning approach for delivering lessons and staff are now required to plan using this approach so that there is consistency in classroom expectations. Through this approach, activities are planned and lessons follow a clear structure designed to engage all pupils. This is evident as staff now understand the demands of using the planning approach as an engagement tool for improving teaching and subsequently learning. Such improvements are testimony to leaders and staff working together consistently so that the school improves. However, teachers must now ensure that planned activities lead to pupils being challenged appropriately in their thinking and learning.

At this early stage, some improvements are evident; for example, during the inspection, teachers used the 'engagement activity' to tap into pupils' prior learning and also set the scene for the learning ahead. Pupils appeared interested and listened, and they knew what they had to do and could recall facts and processes taught in previous lessons. There were also examples of teachers using questioning to develop and extend pupils' understanding. This was the case in a Year 8 English lesson, where the teacher used skilful questioning to challenge pupils' thinking about different techniques they could use when creating a descriptive piece of writing.

Senior leaders responsible for teaching and learning are beginning to build a clearer view of the strengths and weaknesses across the school. They acknowledge that some weaker teaching continues to impede progress and that the performance management system is still inconsistent. However, leaders are working hard to ensure that a quality assurance cycle is implemented so they can monitor what is happening in all classrooms on a day-to-day basis.

Although new procedures are in their very early stages and they are yet to be sustained, teachers are adopting the same strategies and approach to teaching and the management of behaviour. The recent impact of this is that pupils are more settled, are working more productively in lessons and are arriving to their lessons equipped and ready to learn.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Teachers are using more consistent strategies to manage behaviour. This is ensuring that pupils behave well in their lessons and that no learning time is lost because of low-level disruption. Pupils are being praised and encouraged by teachers, and equally pupils are beginning to realise that there are consequences to poor behaviour.

In the minority of instances when low-level disruption was observed during the inspection, staff used the school's procedure to deal with it. Pupils understand the new routines and classroom incidents are reducing because of this. Teachers and

support staff all appreciate the more consistent approach and they feel as though they can now get on with their work of teaching the pupils.

The behaviour of pupils in lessons is largely compliant and calm. Pupils concentrate on their work and the vast majority are interested and engaged in their learning. This is because learning is planned and pupils are clearer about what is expected of them. They are responding well, in the main, to the higher expectations teachers have of them. Teachers are managing behaviour better because they have a greater range of strategies to cope with challenging behaviour. As a consequence, fixed-term exclusions are slowly reducing. The number of pupils being removed from lessons for poor behaviour has also steadily reduced, indicating the early positive impact of the new behaviour management strategies.

Attendance remains a major concern for school leaders. Absence rates have risen since the previous inspection. Attendance is now the lowest it has ever been. The absence rates of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have also increased since the last inspection. The monitoring and support for these groups of pupils have not stemmed the fact that they are increasingly missing lessons. For these groups of pupils, school leaders have set targets of attendance lower than those for other pupils. School leaders acknowledge that they need to evaluate and revise strategies at a more urgent pace in order to significantly improve the attendance rates of pupils and groups of pupils in the main school.

Leaders are not yet analysing groups of pupils' behaviour and attendance incisively enough. They now understand that they must do this so that they can target tailored actions to individuals.

The school has adopted a 'meet and greet' approach to the school day. Pupils are greeted by staff and fruitful conversations take place, building positive relationships between them. As a consequence, pupils move about the school in a calm and orderly manner. They now come to school with the correct equipment in their bags, are using their planners on a daily basis and are wearing their uniforms with pride.

Outcomes for pupils

Provisional results for 2017 indicate that outcomes have declined by the end of key stage 4, with the percentage of pupils attaining a pass in both English and mathematics having fallen since 2016.

Many current Year 11 pupils require additional support in English and mathematics. The support is needed to help them catch up due to the legacy of poor teaching they have received over time. These additional teaching sessions at the start and end of the day are beginning to have a positive impact in bridging gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils appreciate the support and the opportunities to focus on areas they are finding difficult.

Sixth-form outcomes improved in 2017 and the newly appointed head of sixth form is ambitious for improvements to continue. Student retention rates in the sixth form remain relatively low. The percentage of Year 11 pupils from the school choosing to stay on in the sixth form at Balby Carr is also low. A review of the curriculum on offer and improved guidance are now in place, so that current and future students can make better informed choices.

Leaders are under no illusion that there is a lot of work to do to secure better outcomes for pupils throughout key stage 3 and by the end of key stage 4. The strategies school leaders are starting to initiate to improve outcomes are credible and much needed. However, leaders need to ensure that they are monitoring and evaluating the impact of such strategies to sustain long-term improvements.

External support

The trust acknowledges that the school has not been given the support that was necessary to bring about rapid improvement since the previous inspection. As a result, the headteacher and other senior leaders have not been supported adequately in their drive to improve standards. The trust and the interim executive committee have not acted swiftly to seek purposeful external support to develop the school's capacity to improve.

The headteacher and other senior leaders have made the most of support from Doncaster local authority. In June 2017, its visit and subsequent report helped to guide the school's next steps to tackle the areas for improvement around safeguarding with more clarity.