

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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6 October 2017

Mr Lee Taylor  
Headteacher  
Great Wyrley High School  
Hall Lane  
Great Wyrley  
Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS6 6LQ

Dear Mr Taylor

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Great Wyrley High School**

Following my visit with Jacqueline Newsome, Ofsted Inspector, and Andrea Quigley, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 27–28 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 2016.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's development action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Rapidly improve pupils' progress, and thereby the standards they attain, by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all areas of the school, including the sixth form, by:
  - raising teachers' expectations, so that they know that pupils are capable of more challenging work, particularly the most able
  - ensuring that teachers take full account of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding when planning and teaching lessons so that all groups are challenged and stretched to do their best at all times
  - insisting that all teachers provide work that engages all groups of pupils so they are motivated to do well
  - making sure that teachers follow the agreed whole-school assessment policy and insist that pupils present their work in books to higher standard
  - improving teachers' skills in questioning so that they can help pupils think more deeply
  - sharing the good practice that exists in school to effect improvement in all teachers' abilities to improve outcomes for all groups of pupils.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance and the sixth form, so that all leaders are effective in their drive to accelerate the progress pupils and learners make by:
  - accurately evaluating all aspects of the school's work and using this to develop an effective plan for school improvement with clear targets, timelines, responsibilities and accountability in order to ensure rapid progress for all pupils
  - providing training in assessment so that the school's predictions for pupils' achievements are more accurate
  - ensuring that leaders at all levels know and are equipped to fulfil their roles well and are fully involved in actions to raise achievement
  - using the pupil premium funding effectively to reduce gaps in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
  - developing governance so that it is robust and secure, challenges leaders at all levels and rigorously holds them to account so that declining outcomes for pupils or poor quality of teaching, learning and assessment are reversed quickly
  - further increasing attendance and taking positive action to reduce persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special

- educational needs or disability
- ensuring that all teachers consistently implement the school's behaviour policy.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 27–28 September 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, other staff and three groups of pupils. Meetings were also held with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector met briefly with, and considered a letter from, the headteacher of a local primary school.

Inspectors observed learning and behaviour during visits to lessons, sometimes accompanied by senior leaders. They observed pupils at morning break and lunchtime and as they moved around the school. Inspectors spoke with many pupils about their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. Several documents were scrutinised including the school's development plan, self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, and the school's records about pupils' behaviour and attendance.

### **Context**

Since April 2016, the school has had two changes of headteacher. The current headteacher joined the school in January 2017. The senior leadership team has been restructured with the current team in place from September 2017. There has been considerable turnover in staffing with approximately 30 staff leaving the school in the summer of 2017. Several middle leaders are relatively new to post, including subject leaders for English, languages and performing arts. The special needs coordinator (SENCo) joined the school in September 2017.

The pastoral system has been reorganised so that tutor groups now contain pupils from a single year group. Three 'heads of key stage' and six 'assistant heads of key stage' have been in post since September 2017, although most previously held other pastoral posts in the school. In the previous academic year, the school had many temporary teachers. From September 2017, the school is fully staffed.

The current chair of the governing body took up post shortly after the inspection of April 2016. Since that time, three governors have left the governing body and two have been replaced. Governors have established a 'Governors' Executive Board' (GEB) comprising the chair, vice-chair and one other governor. The GEB meets fortnightly.

The anticipated conversion to become a sponsored academy, following the previous inspection, has not happened. Although academy conversion is still anticipated, it is currently unclear when this will happen and who the school's sponsor will be.

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

Following the inspection of April 2016, temporary leadership and governance was established in the school to oversee the anticipated speedy conversion to a sponsored academy. Repeated delays in this process meant that little or no effective action was taken to address the school's weaknesses in the nine months up to January 2017. Consequently, the quality of teaching declined, as did pupils' behaviour. Pupils' attendance declined dramatically.

The arrival of the current headteacher in January 2017 has seen a rapid improvement in the school. The rate of improvement has accelerated further at the start of this academic year as new leaders have taken up post and they have implemented new policies and systems. Clear improvement is now evident in behaviour, teaching, the curriculum, governance, pastoral care and links with primary schools. Staff who spoke to inspectors all said that the school is improving because of the leadership of the headteacher and his senior team. They feel very positively about the school's future and morale is good. It is to leaders' and governors' credit that the continued uncertainty around academy conversion is not slowing the pace of improvement in the school.

Leaders and governors know the school well. Their self-evaluation is detailed and honest. They understand the many areas that need to improve. Their plans to bring about improvement are clear and well-focused on the school's top priorities. Although impact is evident in several areas, including teaching and behaviour, in a few other areas actions have only recently taken place and so have yet to yield convincing evidence of improvement. Attendance and provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are two examples of areas where this is the case.

Governance, which was criticised at the previous inspection, has improved considerably since that time. Governors commissioned a detailed external review of governance in November 2016 and have used its recommendations to implement a governance development plan. Additional governors have been recruited to increase the governing body's expertise, especially in education. Governors have received training in several areas, including safeguarding and interpreting assessment data. The establishment of the GEB has contributed well to governors' effectiveness. This group meets fortnightly and focuses on the measurable impact that improvement activities are having in the school. Governors now know the school well, including its key priorities for improvement. They are very committed to the school and are effectively holding leaders to account for its performance.

The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective. Its leadership is meticulous. Staff have been well trained and understand that pupils' safety is their top priority. They readily pass on any concerns they have about pupils, and leaders deal with all concerns appropriately, making use of external agencies when the need arises.

Leaders have made some changes to the curriculum in response to their evaluation of its previous weaknesses. They have allocated additional teaching time to English, mathematics and science in all year groups. They have introduced separate science qualifications for some pupils in key stage 4. Pupils in key stage 4 now have two hours of physical education each week, previously having had only one. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) used to be taught through 'skills for life' lessons each week. Leaders judged these lessons to be ineffective and have removed them from the curriculum. PSHE will now be taught through five 'drop-down' days throughout the year. None has taken place yet this year.

Subject and pastoral middle leaders form a positive and committed team. They are optimistic about the school's future and they welcome the support that they now receive from senior leaders. Several are new to post and those not new to post are currently coming to terms with the new expectations being placed on them. Subject leaders are beginning to lead the improvement of teaching in their areas, with the support of their link senior leaders.

Leaders have rightly made improving teaching one of the school's top priorities. They have introduced clear expectations of teachers' planning, assessment and behaviour management. Training has been well focused on ensuring that staff understand these expectations. Senior leaders' monitoring of teaching has focused on checking that staff are putting them into practice. However, leaders currently do not have a detailed view about where strengths and weaknesses in teaching exist. Consequently, training is not directed to individuals, subjects or aspects of teaching where it is needed most.

Leaders have introduced new assessment procedures into key stage 3 this year, having judged previous assessment information to be unreliable. As a result, leaders do not currently have a clear view of the progress that pupils are making. Consequently, they are currently unable to identify issues and trends or to target extra help and support to pupils and groups of pupils who need it. Leaders anticipate this being rectified shortly when teachers make their first assessments using the new policy.

Leadership of the school's sixth form was identified as weak at the previous inspection. This has improved considerably since that time. Leaders have improved the sixth form environment and have introduced 'work plans' to support students who are falling behind with their studies. The requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes are currently not met because careers education is weak, work experience is not well planned and other non-qualification activity is not fully in place. Leaders are well aware of these weaknesses and have plans in place to address them in the near future. Students told inspectors that they enjoy being in the sixth form and are glad they chose to stay at the school.

Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is weak. Leaders do not currently have an accurate record of pupils' special educational

needs. Consequently, some pupils who need extra support are not receiving it. The school's new SENCO has appropriate plans in place to address these weaknesses, but it is too early to judge their impact.

Leaders' use of the pupil premium to support disadvantaged pupils has not been effective. These pupils achieved very poorly in GCSE examinations in 2017 and their attendance was even lower than that of other pupils. New leadership of this area has been in place since the start of this term and it is therefore it is too early to see improvement.

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

The quality of teaching is improving but remains inconsistent. Leaders have secured permanent, specialist teachers in all subjects. Several have joined the school this term. Leaders have also introduced clear expectations of planning and assessment which teachers have welcomed. Inspection evidence and leaders' monitoring indicates that teachers are consistently using the agreed lesson structure. Pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that teaching has improved considerably, especially this term. One pupil in Year 11 told inspectors, 'It's so much better that I just wish I could be in Year 7 now.'

Relationships between pupils and teachers are strong. Pupils appreciate their teachers and are generally keen to do well. Most pupils make an effort in their lessons and take pride in their work.

In all aspects of teaching inconsistency is apparent. There is some strong teaching in all subjects, but weaker teaching is also present. For example, some teachers use questions skilfully to deepen pupils' understanding of their work. Other teachers are too ready to accept brief answers so pupils do not have to think hard when offering them. Many teachers plan activities that are well matched to pupils' ability and prior knowledge. However, others do not. Consequently, pupils sometimes find work too easy or too hard. On occasions, this leads to some low-level poor behaviour in lessons.

Teaching in the sixth form does not share the weaknesses apparent in the main school. Effective teaching is evident across subjects.

The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is weak. Because the school's special needs register is inaccurate, teachers are not always aware of pupils' needs. Additionally, some teachers do not know how to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' special educational needs.

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

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. Most said that bullying is rare. Some pupils said that, in the past, staff were not always quick to deal with problems



that arose, including bullying. Leaders acknowledge that this was the case at times. It is one of the reasons for the restructuring of pastoral systems across the school. Behaviour in lessons is generally positive. Pupils are attentive, hardworking and keen to do well. Inspectors observed several examples of well-planned lessons where pupils were enthusiastic, collaborative learners. Where teaching is weaker, some low-level disruption is evident in class, where pupils chat and drift off task. Inspectors observed no serious disruption of learning and pupils confirmed that such disruption of their lessons is rare.

Between lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime, the school is generally calm and orderly. Leaders feel that these are times of the day when behaviour could be better. However, inspectors found pupils to be happy, polite and courteous. All members of staff and almost all pupils who spoke with inspectors were clear that behaviour has improved considerably in recent months, both in lessons and at social times.

Attendance, which was reported to be close to the national average at the last inspection, has declined significantly. During the school's decline, a culture of poor attendance has developed among a significant minority of pupils. Overall attendance for the 2016/17 academic year was very low indeed, with more than a quarter of pupils attending for less than 90% of the time. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils was even lower. Leaders have put in place several strategies to improve attendance this year, including the use of fixed-penalty notices and employing an attendance officer. Just four weeks into the new term, the attendance of Year 11 pupils remains a cause for concern, but there is early evidence that attendance may be improving for younger pupils.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Unvalidated GCSE results for 2017 show pupils continuing to make slow progress by the end of Year 11. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils were particularly poor across almost all subjects. Middle-ability pupils made very weak progress, while the most able made comparatively better progress. Outcomes in English were poor, but a little stronger in mathematics. Pupils fared well in some option subjects including business studies, sport, product design and philosophy and ethics.

Leaders' assessment information for pupils currently in Year 11 suggests they will achieve similar GCSE outcomes to those of the previous year. However, leaders are hopeful that better teaching, improved assessment and carefully targeted intervention will accelerate their progress over the coming months. It is too soon in the year to judge whether this will be the case.

The most recent published outcomes for sixth-form students are for 2016. They show some weak progress in academic subjects, but much stronger progress in vocational subjects. All students who left the sixth form in 2017 moved on to education, employment or training. All who applied to university secured a place at

their first choice.

### **External support**

In the period from April 2016 to December 2016, the local authority commissioned support from Entrust Education in improving teaching, quality assurance and developing schemes of work. This support proved ineffective and did not lead to improvement. However, the external review of governance, sourced through Entrust, proved highly effective in helping governors to improve their ability to hold leaders to account.

Since January 2017, leaders have sourced external support from the City Learning Trust in improving teaching, curriculum planning and leadership of mathematics. This support has proved effective and has contributed well to the school's improvement over that time. Leaders are currently formalising the school's relationship with the City Learning Trust.