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10 November 2017

Ms Lisa Bailey
St Luke's School
Cricklade Road
Swindon
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SN2 7AS

Dear Ms Bailey

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Luke's School

Following my visit with Andrew Penman, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 31 October and 1 November 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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Swindon. 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 November 2016.

- Urgently improve safeguarding by:
 - making sure that pupils' non-attendance is always followed up promptly and not making assumptions about the whereabouts of pupils not in school
 - eliminating the potential for pupils to abscond from the site during the school day
 - providing further training for all staff in de-escalation techniques and ensure that they use them before engaging in physical intervention.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - making sure that leaders work with rigour and urgency to bring about rapid improvements in safeguarding procedures and that governors rigorously hold leaders and managers to account for their successful implementation
 - ensuring that all school leaders routinely analyse and accurately report the information they have about pupils so that governors have a clear understanding about pupils' academic progress and personal development, and using this information to forestall underachievement and respond to shortfalls swiftly and effectively
 - making sure that the curriculum is fit for purpose so that all pupils can achieve well and make good progress, particularly in their behaviour, personal development and well-being
 - ensuring that governors robustly evaluate the impact that the Year 7 catch-up funding is having on helping pupils to catch up in English and mathematics
 - ensuring that governors robustly evaluate the impact that the pupil premium funding has on improving the outcomes and personal development of the most disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment by:
 - making sure that teaching staff and adults who support pupils in lessons have the right subject knowledge and behaviour management skills to enable lessons to be safe, enjoyable learning experiences
 - ensuring that accurate assessment information is used to plan work that matches the learning needs of different groups of pupils, so that the most able pupils are challenged and those who struggle with their learning are supported and guided to reach their potential
 - making sure that adults have high expectations so that pupils are fully engaged in their learning and are well prepared for life in modern Britain
 - accurately identifying pupils' knowledge and understanding when they join the school so that gaps in learning are identified and filled.

- Improve behaviour and safety by:
 - significantly reducing the need for fixed-term exclusion, use of internal isolation and physical intervention
 - improving the attendance of pupils and reducing the proportion who are persistently absent or who abscond.
- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly in English, mathematics and science, by:
 - reducing the time lost through fixed-term exclusions and pupils' absence from school and lessons
 - rigorously checking that all pupils and groups of pupils are making at least expected rates of progress from their starting points
 - improving careers support and pupils' employability by giving all pupils equal access to work-related learning.

An external review of governance, including the school's use of the Year 7 catch-up fund and pupil premium fund, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 31 October 2017 to 1 November 2017

Evidence

During this inspection, inspectors conducted visits to observe pupils' learning and reviewed the pupils' work often accompanied by a senior leader. Inspectors reviewed documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders, staff and pupils.

I held discussions with the chair of the interim executive board (IEB) and two senior officials from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a significant number of staff have left the school, including the head of school and deputy headteacher. A number of support staff have been appointed in the last few months and leaders are currently recruiting additional staff. The number of pupils has remained relatively stable. The governing body was dissolved and an IEB was established in January 2017. Its membership has significantly changed over the months.

The school has opened an off-site centre for some Year 10 and 11 pupils on the site of Swindon College.

The school was issued with an academy order and a sponsor was identified in January 2017. The academy order has yet to be enacted. The future governance arrangements for the school remain uncertain.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

There have been several changes in leadership since the previous inspection. This has been unsettling for staff who seek the strategic direction and guidance to bring about change. Leaders and the members of the IEB have not constructed an improvement plan that staff can use to make the necessary improvements. Department improvement plans are of varying quality and do not show that middle leaders have the skills or understanding to carry out their responsibilities successfully.

Leaders have attempted to broaden the curriculum. However, it remains too narrow. The plans for the teaching of personal, social and health education are weak and the statutory requirement for the teaching of religious education is not being met. More than a third of pupils attend school on a part-time basis. This further limits the subjects they study, with some only attending lessons in English and mathematics.

Safeguarding procedures have been tightened. Leaders with specific responsibility for safeguarding take their roles very seriously and are diligent in following up on any concerns. They have a good understanding of the local authority's thresholds and challenge this when they feel a pupil remains at risk. As a result of their tenacity, the necessary interventions have been put in place for pupils who need them.

Staff training in safeguarding is comprehensive. Members of staff show a good understanding of the different types of child abuse. Consequently, staff keep leaders informed about their concerns. This in turn gives leaders a more detailed understanding about the risks pupils may face, which they use to protect pupils better. However, not all members of staff give sufficient thought to their own behaviours to keep both pupils and themselves safe.

The arrangements for pupils who do not attend school on a full-time basis remain a cause for concern. Leaders cannot assure themselves that pupils are safe throughout the school day. Site safety on the main school site has been improved. There are still instances of pupils absconding, particularly from the Swindon College site. When this happens, arrangements are in place to notify parents, carers and the police.

The arrangements for teaching pupils to stay safe have improved a little but this is piecemeal and requires greater thought and planning to develop a cohesive programme which will have the greatest impact.

Many systems, such as behaviour tracking and rewards for pupils, have been changed since the previous inspection. However, leaders have not ensured that they are implemented consistently by all staff. Consequently, staff do not have the same expectations or follow agreed protocols. As a result, pupils' progress and behaviour varies class by class.

The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who did not reach the expected standard in English or mathematics is not used effectively. Leaders do not sufficiently consider the barriers that pupils face to use the funding specifically to allow pupils to overcome their hurdles.

The lack of clarity of the future governance of the school has inhibited the strategic development that is urgently required. Leaders have been distracted and sometimes their actions have been impeded by potential changes to governance. This has meant that the extensive changes that are needed have not been fully implemented. Leaders have not changed policies with sufficient urgency or developed medium- or long-term plans.

The IEB has not held staff to account sufficiently for the improvements to the quality of education and pupils' safety, particularly of those who are not educated at the main school site.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains inadequate. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are often too low. Teachers' assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do is not accurate. As a result, teachers do not consistently plan learning that provides pupils with the support they need or suitably challenges the most able pupils.

Insufficient progress has been made to ensure that teaching staff and adults who support pupils in lessons have the subject knowledge and behaviour management skills they need to ensure that pupils conduct themselves appropriately and make the progress they should. The teaching of reading for those pupils who struggle to read is particularly weak.

Leaders have not ensured that they have sufficient information about pupils' academic abilities before they arrive at the school. Therefore, teaching staff have not planned learning that meets their needs and so behaviour is poor.

Where staff have developed strong relationships with pupils and have clear expectations, pupils generally behave well and make stronger progress. This is particularly the case where lessons are designed to engage their interest. For example in food technology, learning is planned well to motivate and enthuse pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour continues to be a concern. While the number of incidents of violent and destructive behaviours have reduced dramatically, the incessant lack of focus on learning, arguments between pupils and poor attitudes to learning continue.

Following a programme of training, staff are now better equipped to manage the most challenging behaviours and so the need for physical intervention and the number of exclusions have reduced considerably.

Attendance remains low and is well below those levels seen typically. Recent changes to attendance monitoring systems are in their infancy and leaders have not yet ensured that they are being fully and consistently applied.

Outcomes for pupils

Progress continues to be too slow for the vast majority of pupils. The lack of an assessment system that accurately reflects pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding means that leaders cannot track with any confidence the progress that pupils are making.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a concerted effort to improve the careers advice, guidance and experiences for pupils in key stage 4. This has involved many pupils accessing work-related learning. The checks that leaders have carried out on these placements are suitably rigorous. Greater work with local further education colleges and training providers and stronger transition arrangements have ensured that the vast majority of pupils who left the school in the summer have continued to study at local colleges. This is a significant improvement on previous years. However, as a result of the limited progress pupils made during their time at the school, many of those who have left are now engaged on courses at a much more basic level than they should.

External support

In the spring and summer terms, leaders were supported by the executive headteacher of a neighbouring special school. Some of the initiatives that were started earlier in the year were bringing about some improvements. These have not been able to be sustained. They have not, therefore, had the full impact that had been anticipated.

Additional support from the local authority and external consultants has not been effective in bringing about the sufficiently rapidly improvements needed.

In recent months, there has been no external support for the school.