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20 December 2017

Mrs Caroline Green
Principal
Beaumont Hill Academy
Salters Lane South
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Dear Mrs Green

Special measures monitoring inspection of Beaumont Hill Academy

Following my visit with Marian Thomas, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 6 December 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2017. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the academy monitoring group, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Darlington local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- As a matter of urgency, improve the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements by making sure that:
 - all checks on the suitability of staff are in place and the school's central record of checks is complete and meets Department for Education requirements
 - pupils' behaviour, including the use of physical restraint, is managed safely and effectively.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by making sure that:
 - leaders and governors have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the school's work, especially the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the management of pupils' behaviour
 - leaders and governors closely monitor the impact of additional funding on the attendance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils and use this information to secure and sustain improvement in the outcomes they achieve.
- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate the progress pupils make, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with social, emotional and mental health needs, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information to plan learning activities which are closely matched to pupils' interests and levels of ability
 - teachers check whether pupils are working productively on tasks which secure, develop and deepen their knowledge and skills and, if not, provide additional help or more challenging work
 - teaching assistants provide the consistent high-quality help and support pupils need to make fast progress in their learning.

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 pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 6 December 2017

Evidence

This monitoring inspection took place over one day. The inspectors focused only on the leadership and governance aspects of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the inspection in January 2017. The inspectors held meetings with the principal and deputy principal, a group of middle leaders and a group of staff. They also held discussions with the chief executive of the Education Village Academy Trust (EVAT) and representatives of the academy monitoring group (AMG), the interim local governing body arrangements. A telephone discussion was held with Darlington local authority's education safeguarding officer. The inspectors carried out short observations of learning with senior leaders. They spoke informally to pupils in lessons and formally to two groups of pupils at breaktime to gather their views on the school's improvements. The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, reviews of the actions within the plan, and minutes from meetings of the AMG and board of directors. They also scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including records of misbehaviour and physical interventions by staff.

Context

There have been a number of organisational changes since the last monitoring inspection. Five new teachers have been appointed. Two staff have been promoted to middle leadership roles. The number of pupils on roll at the Stephenson Centre, (the school's provision for pupils who have an education, health and care plan for their social, emotional or mental health difficulties) continues to reduce. Consultation with parents, carers and the wider educational community is currently taking place on proposed changes to the admissions policy in order to remove this provision in the future. An independent chair of the AMG has been appointed.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders remain energised by the journey out of special measures and are continuing to drive improvement effectively. The school's safeguarding arrangements developed after the inspection continue to be strengthened and are the subject of close scrutiny by leaders, the local authority and the AMG. Checks on the recruitment of staff are rigorous and meet fully the Department for Education's requirements. Bound books that record any physical intervention are completed in a timely and comprehensive way. The quality of recording, and of staff's and pupils' reporting of the incidents, is strong. Important information from these records and for any behaviour incident is logged onto electronic systems and any incident is followed up quickly. This is so that restorative action can be taken or action in pupils' individual behaviour support plans amended to reduce the risk of further incidents.

Incidents of physical intervention in the Stephenson Centre have reduced significantly over time. They are virtually unheard of in other parts of the school. Staff training on the techniques to de-escalate potential flare-ups in pupils' behaviour continue, alongside strategies to help pupils to understand their trigger points and how to manage their own behaviour more effectively. Pupils report that they can see how staff are good at helping them calm down and settle themselves when they have been having a difficult day. They also report there has been a big fall in the use of physical intervention in the centre. Staff do not use the more complex physical interventions on pupils and use only the lower levels of physical support. The pupils report that they are safe. Indeed, they say the school's procedures have been tightened so much that they are too cosseted and need a bit more freedom. Leaders know this because they have talked to pupils and they are working with the school council to take account of their views.

Governors continue to develop their skills and improve their effectiveness in holding leaders to account for the impact of their work. Each governor now has a specialist area of focus and they diligently review their area of responsibility. Reports to the AMG provide detailed analysis of the outcomes of their reviews. Together, these reports and the very detailed, regular headteacher's reports on pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance, ensure that governors have a strong oversight of the school's work. They have a particularly strong oversight of safeguarding arrangements. Since the last monitoring inspection, a further review of safeguarding arrangements has been conducted by a nationally recognised safeguarding specialist. The few areas for improvement suggested have been acted on. Two specialist safeguarding professionals, one from the local authority and one from the Local Safeguarding Children Board, are representatives on the AMG. They are rigorous in their checking of all safeguarding arrangements. The chief executive of the trust continues to provide helpful support and challenge to school leaders and to the AMG. Governors value his clarity and openness in his reflections on what is working well and what still needs to improve.

The senior team is open and honest in its appraisal of the school's work. Detailed plans identify the actions that staff are taking to move the school forward. They have a clear understanding of the current quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. They know that there is still more to do to ensure that teaching is consistently good, so that all pupils can achieve their best from their very varied starting points. Assessment of pupils' learning is now regular. More teachers are using information from assessments to plan activities that are matched to the needs of each pupil. However, not all teachers use their plans well enough in lessons and the personalised activities they have identified are not provided to the pupils. When this happens, pupils' progress slows.

Teachers continue to be provided with a range of training opportunities to hone their skills and improve their effectiveness. They value this support and the opportunities they have had to visit outstanding practice in other schools. Senior leaders have also valued the opportunities to visit other special schools to reflect on

their own practice and to garner ideas that will help to move the school forward. Training for teaching assistants is leading to their more effective involvement with, and support to, pupils in lessons. Staff new to the school have a thorough induction process, and are well supported in strategies to manage pupils' behaviour and to help their pupils progress in their learning and development.

Middle leadership is developing effectively. While a number of leaders are new to their posts, they feel that they are now playing an active role in bringing about improvement in their subject areas, areas of specialism and the school's journey out of special measures. For example, the English coordinator has introduced a systematic process for the teaching of phonics and reading across the school. This is contributing to the improving literacy levels seen in lessons and pupils' books. Middle leaders are involved in checking teachers' planning and are starting to carry out lesson observations and reviews of pupils' books in their subject specialisms. However, this is in the early stages of development.

Work to improve pupils' attendance is making its mark and attendance rates are now nearer to those found nationally. Careful analysis of attendance and persistent absence rates of individual pupils and groups of pupils takes place regularly and action is taken quickly to halt any decline. The appointment of two attendance and well-being officers has contributed to the improvement in pupils' attendance. They work with families of pupils who are at risk of not attending, and when necessary collect pupils to get them into school on time. Persistent absence rates have reduced by over 8% points in the past year as a result of actions taken. Pupils in the Stephenson Centre report that they are attending more regularly because of the wider range of subjects and examinations they can take and the higher expectations staff have that they can achieve their aspirational goals for the future.

External support

Leaders continue to look outward to secure appropriate advice and support. They are currently working with the Dales Teaching School Alliance. Strategies developed with the alliance are helping to improve the quality of teaching and middle leadership. The education development adviser, commissioned shortly after the inspection, continues to provide insightful challenge and practical support. Her reports identify clearly the emerging strengths and areas that need further focus. Leaders respond positively to any recommendations.