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Mr Tom Ashley
Principal
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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 Michael Wardle, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Catherine Garrett, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 16– 17 January 2018, 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 April 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 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 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 interim chief executive officer of the multi academy trust, 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:
 - 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 (SEN) 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 SEN funding to ensure that learning and behaviour are at least good for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN 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 second monitoring inspection on 16 to 17 January 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, other senior leaders, a range of middle leaders and groups of staff and pupils. Inspectors observed teaching across a range of subjects and year groups, mostly with leaders. Inspectors scrutinised the school's improvement plan, single central record and documents relating to behaviour, attendance, teaching and learning and current pupils' assessment information. Inspectors also carried out a work scrutiny from a range of pupils and abilities in English, mathematics and science. Discussions were also held with a representative from Astrea Academy Trust, the chair of the interim chief executive officer for Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT) and a representative from Doncaster local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in September 2017, the preferred sponsor for the school has been identified. Astrea Academy Trust has completed due diligence and offered support and guidance to you. A senior leader has been seconded to the school for a short period to support the work of leaders responsible for behaviour and attendance. There are some issues around staffing and some roles have not yet been appointed on a permanent basis, although you continue to monitor this so that such instability is not adversely affecting the education of pupils on a long-term basis.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the previous monitoring visit, you have continued to work tirelessly to improve standards across the school. You are realistic and, because of your unflinching candour, you recognise that some areas of the school are not improving quickly enough. You continue to be aware of the many challenges that face the school. Despite many challenges since the previous monitoring visit, you have made changes in policies and procedures and 'green shoots' of improvement are now visible. You have clarity of thought, which allows you to correctly identify where improvements are required, and this supports the leadership and steady improvement journey of the school. However, it is evident that in order to ensure consistency and improve standards you need time to embed recent changes so that you can evaluate the impact of them. Staff agree with this view.

You have sought appropriate advice to ensure that the school's improvement plan is fit for purpose. As a result, the plan provides a clear direction of travel and a series of measurable actions to be taken in order to improve standards. While you are aware of the strategic direction of travel, some leaders do not provide the strategic oversight needed to improve and, subsequently, raise standards. Systems are in place, but these are not being used incisively enough by some leaders to evaluate

the impact of actions taken. This is particularly the case with developing the quality of teaching, improving pupils' attendance and reducing persistent absenteeism. Such aspects of school life are critical and these barriers must be overcome if the school is to improve.

Some leaders do not strategically plan or evaluate the impact of their actions and, as a result, inconsistencies in leadership remain. Despite improvements in the curriculum on offer at key stages 4 and 5, recent changes, for example the development of a skills-based Year 7 curriculum and the development of the key stage 3 mathematics schemes of work, have been poorly planned and implemented. As a result, some pupils are repeating work and others are doing exercises that lack challenge and are too easy for them. Some teachers are not confident in delivering the curriculum, and work in pupils' books demonstrates that some teachers are not following the newly introduced schemes of work.

In July 2017, an external review of the use of pupil premium funding took place. Although this was reviewed at the previous monitoring visit, leaders have still not acted swiftly enough to address the shortfalls in the review itself and initiate a new strategic plan so that disadvantaged pupils' progress accelerates. As a result, teachers are still not providing well-planned opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. Similarly, such opportunities are not routinely planned for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

In the main, and despite inconsistencies, weaknesses in the quality of teaching are being addressed. However, some leaders' monitoring and evaluation of the impact of teaching lack precision. Leaders are not putting enough clear emphasis on the aspects of teaching that are having a direct and positive impact on pupils' progress. As a result, opportunities lack direction and are lost in follow-up conversations with staff to improve the quality of their work. Additionally, some leaders continue to focus on compliance, for example when completing a work scrutiny. Leaders are not fully adept or confident in measuring the levels of progress and challenge of subject content, but rather check that teachers have covered the correct work in the correct order. As a result, leaders have not yet securely driven whole-school improvements in teaching.

The disbanding of the interim executive committee, compounded by a continual lack of strategic support from WCAT, has led to your not being given the adequate support and challenge necessary to improve standards as urgently as you were seeking at the first monitoring visit. Governance of the school continues to be weak and, as a result, some checks are not in place. For example, the school's website still fails to comply with statutory requirements, and those responsible for governance have not challenged the school to this end. Some key changes have not been ratified by an appropriate governing body, and therefore cannot be implemented effectively. Since the previous monitoring visit, however, you have initiated a review of the current governance situation so that an interim committee can be set up for the next two terms.

Middle leaders are enthusiastic, and committed to your resolute ambition and drive to improve standards. Changes in the way middle leaders are held to account are having a positive impact on the running of the school. This is increasing leadership capacity and providing you with appropriate support. These colleagues are positive about the direction of the school.

The interim leader of the sixth form is effective in their role. Students continue to make effective progress in this area of the school's work. Students are well supported and are suitably advised about their next steps in education, employment or training. Those responsible for, and a part of, the school's 'Sport Academy' continue to play a pivotal role in this successful area of the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Some improvements in the quality of teaching are evident, but these are slow and most teachers still do not expect enough from pupils. In addition, too many pupils are disengaged and disinterested in their learning. Some pupils said that, where expectations are not high enough, learning is limited because of low-level disruption, which is still common in some areas of the school. The work in pupils' books, scrutinised by inspectors with school leaders, shows too much variation in the expectations teachers have for pupils and in the standards pupils are reaching in English, mathematics and science. Presentation of work is often sloppy, and feedback for pupils to improve is scarce and not in line with school policy. As a result, pupils are making limited progress and their rates of progress are not improving rapidly enough.

There are, undoubtedly, some effective features of teaching at Balby Carr. However, there are still too many activities that are planned to keep pupils busy, so they do not misbehave, rather than to provide well-planned learning that is designed to engage, develop and consolidate pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, too many activities are pitched at a low level and fail to challenge pupils enough.

Teachers and teaching assistants have a substantial amount of pupil information readily available to inform their planning. This includes useful information about any specific needs that pupils have, including those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, the use of this valuable information remains highly inconsistent. Some teachers use it to plan effective learning, where challenge is appropriate and pupils are engaged, while others do not, and this is yet to be effectively addressed by leaders.

The use of questioning also remains inconsistent. In a minority of instances, for example in a science and a Spanish lesson, questioning was used to gauge pupils' understanding, to tap into their prior knowledge, and to push their current understanding forward. However, in the main, questioning is not used skilfully, as

pupils are asked superficial questions that require repetition of knowledge and understanding. Many teachers are not yet skilled at using questioning to check pupils' understanding and tackle their misconceptions.

Pupils were sometimes seen to be engaging in and enjoying their learning, for example in drama where they were improvising sketches based on bullying. Pupils were developing their drama skills in addition to resilience. Other pupils were enjoying their learning in music, learning the ukulele, and developing stamina when circuit training in physical education. In these lessons, teachers had high expectations of the behaviour of pupils and, as a result, pupils were listening, engaging and making progress in their skills and subject knowledge. The expectations of some teachers have been raised. However, more needs to be done to embed these improvements and make sure that the best practice in teaching is spread and embedded across the school effectively, and that it has a more positive impact.

Sixth-form students benefit from increasingly effective teaching. Plans are in place to extend some of the features of the sport academy into other curriculum areas of the sixth form.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The school's actions to keep pupils safe are increasingly effective. Necessary staff supervision of pupils at break and lunch times, and at the beginning and end of the school day, is careful and well organised. Pupils said that such supervision makes them feel safe in school. Behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is showing signs of improvement as a result of staff's sustained efforts. For the most part, staff expectations of how pupils should behave are improving.

Teachers and other staff remain committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils at your school are safe. Your child protection officer and designated safeguarding lead have developed a training plan that is intended to add substantial capacity to this team in order to support pupils who may be at risk. Consequently, the school can support these pupils and their families much earlier.

Staff spoke to inspectors about the improvements in the behaviour of pupils around the site and recent changes to the 'consequence system', which they see as positive. Nonetheless, many of the pupils that inspectors spoke to have yet to notice these improvements. While it is in its infancy, you and other staff acknowledge that for behaviour to improve, the 'consequence system' must be given the time to embed.

Pupils spoken to during the visit were helpful. Inspectors observed them moving around the school courteously and with an awareness of others. Pupils were able to speak with some confidence about the school and your work to improve standards. They spoke about how the school helps them understand how to keep safe,

including when using the internet and social media. However, pupils told inspectors of continuing disruption to lessons, excessive litter and the use of derogatory language by some pupils to others, including sexist, racist and homophobic language. Some pupils continue to be late for lessons as they dawdle around the school site.

Leaders are yet to have any impact on reducing rates of absence and decreasing rates of persistent absenteeism. Despite the efforts of leaders, few gains have been made since the previous monitoring visit. Attendance overall, and for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, remains extremely low. Leaders are yet to put a systematic approach in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of strategies to ensure that there are sustained improvements in the rates of absence and persistent absence. As a consequence, a number of pupils regularly miss school and access to their educational entitlement.

Sixth-form students said that the advice and guidance that the school offers them about their learning, welfare and next steps is of a good standard. In particular, they made favourable comments about the ways in which the interim leader of the sixth form deals with issues effectively and offers them advice and guidance.

Outcomes for pupils

Validated results for 2017 indicate that pupils' outcomes have declined by the end of key stage 4. The percentage of pupils attaining a pass in both English and mathematics has fallen since 2016. The progress and attainment of students at the end of key stage 5 were also below those of their peers nationally in 2017. You and other school leaders are aware that rates of progress remain low.

You and the assistant headteacher responsible for pupils' progress and outcomes have put a far more rigorous system in place for collecting and analysing data about pupils' progress and outcomes. Therefore, the information leaders and teachers now have about pupils' current assessments is much more rigorous. As a consequence, leaders are able to intervene more quickly when pupils have not achieved as well as expected. This is particularly the case for current Year 11 pupils. As a result of this work, along with some improvements in teaching, current pupil assessment information indicates that the proportion of pupils on track to attain both English and mathematics, at grades 4 or 5 or above, is rising this year. Intervention sessions, particularly in English and mathematics, have begun to overcome gaps in pupils' knowledge, ensuring that they have a better chance of achieving their potential. However, leaders acknowledge there is still a long way to go to secure these improvements.

The information that the school possesses on the rates of pupils' progress shows that progress is stronger in option subjects than in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and inspection evidence supports this.

Inspection evidence and the school's own information show a highly variable picture of pupils' progress across key stage 3. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is still not as rapid as it should be. Although there is now an increased focus on improving the curriculum at key stage 3, leaders acknowledge there is still a lot of work to be done. You and other leaders have altered the structure of the school day for Year 7, and their location in the building, to 'reboot' attitudes to learning and improve rates of progress.

There is only limited evidence of improvement in standards across year groups and in different subjects. The rate of improvement is not yet quick enough to lead to the removal of special measures.

External support

WCAT has removed all support from the school. As a consequence, you and other leaders are not receiving the support that is necessary to bring about rapid improvement.