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Mrs Caroline Down
St Luke's School
Cricklade Road
Swindon
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SN2 7AS

Dear Mrs Down

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Luke's School

Following my visit with Sarah McGinnis, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 22 and 23 February 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 November 2016. 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 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 second monitoring inspection on 22 to 23 February 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed pupils learning and at social times both on the main site and for those pupils who are educated on the school's site on the campus of Swindon College. One inspector observed pupils learning at an alternative provider.

Inspectors reviewed documentation and met with the acting principal, senior leaders and the vice-chair of the interim executive board (IEB). One inspector met with senior officials from the identified academy sponsor, who are providing external support to the school under a service level agreement.

A telephone discussion was held with a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection, the academy order, issued in January 2017, is yet to be enacted. In the meantime, the local authority has engaged in a service level agreement with the multi-academy trust that has been named as the potential sponsor. As yet, there is no confirmed date for the school to become an academy.

As part of the service level agreement, the trust has seconded a principal to the school to provide additional leadership capacity.

The local authority has appointed additional members to the IEB. These members have significant experience of working in the education sector and some have extensive experience of school governance.

The number of pupils on roll has remained relatively stable and a few members of staff have joined the school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders, members of the IEB and the local authority have not brought about the rapid improvements needed. There has been very little progress since the previous monitoring inspection. Very recently, the local authority has formally appointed The White Horse Federation to provide day-to-day support for the school. This is most obviously seen in the secondment of a principal since the start of the spring term, to provide additional leadership capacity.

Insufficient thought has been given to the school's curriculum, the needs of the pupils and ensuring pupils' safety. More than two-fifths of pupils attend school on a part-time basis. Leaders have not ensured that systems are rigorous enough to check these pupils are safe when not in school.

The principal is strongly committed to ensuring that pupils are safe and improving the quality of education at St Luke's. She has a clear understanding of the most pressing weaknesses. There is now an urgency to use this knowledge to effect change.

A school improvement plan has been drafted since the previous monitoring inspection. However, critical activities have not been sufficiently prioritised. The plan lacks measurable outcomes and milestones by which the principal and the IEB can monitor progress and hold personnel to account. Timescales are not rapid enough and, in some cases, deadlines that were set have not been met.

The curriculum remains unfit for purpose. Too often, pupils do not see the purpose to their learning. They respond with a disinterest in their learning and poor behaviour. Leaders have not revised the curriculum to better engage pupils in learning and plan to help pupils develop strategies to manage their social, emotional and mental health needs. Some attempt has been made to help pupils improve their reading but leaders have not yet evaluated the impact of this change.

Leaders have put in place some baseline assessment of pupils' reading skills. Other tests have been undertaken by pupils but the outcomes have not been scrutinised by leaders. There is still no comprehensive understanding of pupils' academic, therapeutic and personal needs on entry to the school. There remains no strategic approach to assessment across the school. There have been some initial attempts to formulate assessment systems in some subjects but this is not yet having any impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, leaders and IEB members do not have information they find useful in their oversight of the progress that pupils are making.

At the inspection in November 2016, governors were tasked with evaluating the impact that the Year 7 catch-up funding is having on helping pupils to catch up in English and mathematics. They were also charged with evaluating the impact that the pupil premium funding has on improving the outcomes and personal development of the most disadvantaged pupils. Neither of these tasks have been completed. There is very limited evidence of the impact of either funding stream. A leader has been tasked with overseeing these funds but very little work has been done and no information has yet been provided to IEB members on the impact of this funding.

The support for pupils and their families at times of crises continues to be strong. Good use is made of the support available from a wide range of agencies to help families when they need it. Staff who have specific responsibility for safeguarding remain assiduous in discharging their duties. Other leaders do not sufficiently tap in to the deep understanding the school has about its pupils and their families when planning strategic developments.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers' expectations remain too low in too many subjects. Teachers do not assess what pupils already know, understand and can do. Therefore, learning is not sufficiently well planned to ensure that pupils make the progress they should. This is not the case in all subjects; for example in food technology, pupils were considering the reactions that some foods cause in humans. From this, they explored emergency responses and considered dietary changes to remove allergens from some foodstuffs. When learning is well planned and engaging, pupils make rapid progress. However, this is too often the exception rather than the rule.

In too many subjects, teaching staff do not show good subject knowledge to craft learning that interests pupils or meets their needs. Consequently, too frequently, pupils absent themselves from class as they do not engage in the tasks that are set for them, particularly when they are asked to write independently.

In key stage 4, pupils are being entered for an increasing number of qualifications. Teaching is not yet preparing them adequately to undertake these assessments. For example, teachers do not plan activities that help pupils sufficiently to concentrate for longer periods or to adequately sustain their written responses.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Attendance remains low with no sign of improvement across the year. Currently pupils attend, on average, for less than two-thirds of the week. Staff do not consistently follow up non-attendance after the first day of absence. Longer-term absentees are not routinely monitored and in two cases children who have been absent for several weeks have not been notified to the local authority by the school. There remains no coherent overview of pupils with poor attendance patterns or strategies in place to improve their attendance. The impact of external support to improve attendance is limited.

Over two-fifths of pupils attend on a part-time basis. Leaders cannot assure themselves that these pupils are safe when they are not at school or when attending alternative provision. There are no risk assessments or control measures in place to ensure that pupils who attend alternative provision are safe.

Absconding continues to reduce but has not yet been eliminated. Similarly, the use of physical intervention and restraint has fallen. A few members of staff show some skills in de-escalating pupils when they are in a heightened state of anxiety but this is not commonplace. The principal has plans in place to develop the skills of all staff members in the near future.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes in English, mathematics and science show limited signs of improvement. Inspectors observed pupils working at levels below those the pupils are capable of. Too often, work is poorly matched to pupils' needs. Frequently, misconceptions or errors are not swiftly tackled, meaning that pupils cannot progress on to more challenging work in these subjects successfully.

The focus on careers guidance has been concentrated on Year 11 pupils to ensure that they make plans to continue their education when they leave the school. This has had some success; however, pupils do not yet know if they have been successful in their applications to colleges.

External support

The support brokered by the local authority in the autumn term had very little impact and has not resulted in the improvements that were urgently needed.

The support from The White Horse Federation is very recent. The secondment of the principal has allowed a full and honest appraisal of the school's effectiveness and allowed the priorities for improvement to be identified. The impact of the additional support from The White Horse Federation is yet to be seen.