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Mr Lee Taylor
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Dear Mr Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Great Wyrley High School

Following my visit with Robert Bourdon-Pierre, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 15 to 16 May 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 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school's development 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 disabilities
- ensuring that all teachers consistently implement the school's behaviour policy.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 15–16 May 2018

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record. They met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, other staff and two groups of pupils. Meetings were also held with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector met with, and considered a letter from, the headteacher of a local primary school.

Inspectors observed learning and behaviour during visits to lessons, mostly 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, assessment information and the school's records about pupils' attendance.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the Windsor Academy Trust has been identified as the school's sponsor and plans for conversion to an academy are at an advanced stage. The school is due to join the trust in September 2018. A deputy headteacher from the Windsor Academy Trust has been seconded to the school to aid the academy conversion process.

Two governors, including the vice-chair, have left the governing body. A new vice-chair has joined the governing body. The school remains fully staffed. One teacher has left the school and has been replaced.

Leaders are currently consulting about a restructuring of the school's staffing.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and senior leaders have ensured that the school has continued to improve. They know the school very well. Improvement plans are detailed and clear. Consequently, improvement is evident in all areas of the school including behaviour, attendance, teaching, pupils' progress and provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Members of staff appreciate the headteacher's strong and principled leadership. They also value the openness and support of the senior leadership team.

Leaders now have an accurate view of the quality of teaching across the school. They provide a comprehensive programme of training for teachers and other adults. They have changed the school week to provide a weekly training session for staff.

Teachers work in groups of three to reflect on, and improve, their practice. Staff have embraced these opportunities with enthusiasm and teaching has improved as a result.

Governance remains strong. Governors regularly and carefully hold leaders to account for the school's performance. They check on the impact that improvement actions are having and are quick to challenge if impact is not apparent.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school's assessment systems were new and untested. These are now well embedded and understood by staff. Teachers and leaders are increasingly using assessment information to spot pupils who are falling behind. They are then able to provide extra support to help them catch up.

Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Leaders now have an accurate register of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. All such pupils now have a 'pupil passport', which outlines their specific needs and identifies the extra help they receive and strategies that teachers should use in the classroom to support them. Teachers are expected to access this information and use it when planning activities. However, the extent to which they do so remains variable.

Leaders have provided training for teachers in some common types of special educational needs including dyslexia and autism. Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils in lessons. They also provide individual or small-group sessions for pupils who need help with areas such as handwriting, reading, spelling and numeracy.

The school's sixth form is now well led. Leaders now regularly check on students' progress and provide extra support should they begin to fall behind with their work. All aspects of the 16 to 19 study programmes are now in place. Students receive regular careers guidance. A comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme is taught each week. It helps students learn about topics such as personal finance, online safety and sexual health. Students take part in a range of enrichment activities that supplement their academic studies and help to develop their leadership and interpersonal skills. All students will undertake a week of work experience later in the term. Leaders recognise that the next development is to ensure that each student has their study programme planned and personalised as they enter the sixth form in Year 12.

Middle leaders continue to form a committed and passionate team. They are very well supported by senior leaders and they appreciate this support. Middle leaders are increasingly involved in checking on and improving teaching within their areas. They are beginning to develop into autonomous leaders, relying less on the guidance of their senior leader link.

Leaders' work with local primary schools continues to grow. Primary schools use the school's swimming pool and arts facilities. Pupils in Year 6, who are due to join the school in September 2018, will spend the last three weeks of the summer term at the school. This is intended to aid transition to secondary school and specifically to prevent any dip in learning as they move. The school is becoming more popular with local parents. For example, the number of parents making Great Wyrley their first choice for the intake in September 2018 has increased by 50% compared with the previous year.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching continues to improve. Although some variability in quality remains, the majority of teaching is now effective across most subjects. There is now a greater consistency in the quality of teachers' planning. Expectations are high and teachers mostly plan activities that challenge and interest pupils. Most teachers use questions well to deepen pupils' understanding of their work, although some are still too ready to accept brief responses to questions. Teachers are more confident in using the school's assessment systems and they are beginning to use this assessment information when planning lessons.

Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Most pupils like their teachers and value their support. Pupils told inspectors that they believe that teaching has improved considerably this year.

Teaching assistants provide skilful help for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They provide the right amount of help, encouraging pupils to work independently and not to be reliant on their support.

Teachers now have access to high-quality information about pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This includes strategies that they are expected to use to support these pupils in lessons. However, teachers do not use this guidance consistently well. While there is some effective practice, some teachers do not take note of the advice that leaders have provided. Others lack the expertise to put leaders' advice into practice in their lessons. As a result, in too many lessons, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not make as much progress as they should.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The improvement in behaviour reported at the previous inspection has been maintained. Pupils behave well in most lessons. They have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. There remains a little poor behaviour in class, typically when teaching is weaker or when teachers fail to use the school's behaviour systems. Inspectors observed very little poor behaviour in lessons during this inspection. At breaktime, lunchtime and between lessons, the school is calm and orderly. Most pupils are polite and courteous.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They said that bullying is rare and most said that it is dealt with well by the school's adults. However, a small number of pupils told inspectors that they do not have confidence in the school's adults to deal with issues when they arise.

Attendance has improved since September 2017, albeit from a particularly low figure at the end of the previous year. Younger year groups have higher attendance than older ones, where a culture of poor attendance remains among a significant minority of pupils. Despite this year's improvement, attendance is currently well below the national average for secondary schools. Leaders recognise that this remains a key area where further improvement is needed.

Staff have worked hard this year to improve the range of off-site visits and other activities that contribute to pupils' personal development. Pupils speak of 'putting the great back into Great Wyrley'. There have been several foreign visits and more local trips with a curriculum focus. Pupils have been involved in several charity fundraising activities. The arts have a higher profile in the school. All of these aspects, which had been neglected in previous years, are now beginning to contribute increasingly well to pupils' more positive views about their school.

Outcomes for pupils

Since the previous inspection, validated GCSE and sixth-form examination results for 2017 have been published. GCSE results show that pupils made weak progress across many subjects including English, mathematics and science. Disadvantaged pupils made particularly weak progress across most subjects. Outcomes were stronger in some subjects including history and languages, and on vocational courses. Post-16 results showed students making weak progress in A-level courses but better progress in vocational subjects.

Better teaching, improved behaviour and stronger use of assessment information are seeing progress improve for current pupils. This is particularly true for pupils in key stage 3 where, for example, disadvantaged pupils are now making similar progress to other pupils. Pupils in key stage 4 are also making better progress, although this is not as marked as for younger pupils.

A-level outcomes are improving this year, because of better teaching, more robust quality assurance procedures and closer tracking of students' progress.

Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making slower progress than they should. This is because teachers are not yet consistently using information about their needs to plan appropriate support in lessons.

External support

Leaders and governors have made good use of an external consultant to support their self-evaluation activities and to link subject leaders to schools where effective practice exists.