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David Milner
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Dear Mr Milner

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Giles Academy

Following my visit with Ofsted Inspectors Heidi Malliff and Rebecca King to your academy on 22 and 23 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. I would like to thank your senior leaders for the help that they gave in your absence during the inspection and for the time the interim executive headteacher made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the academy'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 October 2017.

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 trust's statement of action, which is also the academy's improvement plan, is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the

Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Innes-Taylor

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, by:
 - ensuring that the trustees check more robustly the school’s performance and hold school leaders to account for the progress that pupils make
 - ensuring that the pupils feel safe at school, particularly at breaktimes and lunchtimes
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations and check more closely on the progress that the pupils are making in their learning
 - using the information from leaders’ monitoring of teaching to evaluate the school’s effectiveness accurately and to tackle the weaknesses in teaching more rigorously than is the case currently
 - training the subject leaders to know how well pupils are achieving in the subject areas that they lead
 - making sure that the actions set for teachers, as part of the appraisal process, are more precise, in order to help teachers to improve their performance
 - allocating and monitoring the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities more effectively, to enable these pupils to make good progress
 - strengthening provision to develop pupils’ understanding of British values and their knowledge of different faiths and cultures
 - strengthening the quality of information provided to parents about their child’s progress
 - ensuring that the curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils learn well in a wide range of subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - assess more accurately the needs of the pupils, including the most able and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - plan work which is more closely matched to pupils’ individual needs
 - address pupils’ misconceptions in a timely way
 - develop pupils’ reading comprehension skills, so that they have a deeper understanding of the texts that they read
 - improve pupils’ writing skills in key stage 1 by encouraging pupils to check that their sentences make sense

- strengthen pupils’ ability to reason mathematically, so that they can answer accurately more challenging questions.
- Strengthen pupils’ personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reducing the proportion of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, who are persistently absent, by working more closely with pupils and their parents to explore how the causes of absence can be overcome
 - reducing the amount of low-level disruption in lessons
 - reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions
 - improving pupils’ attitudes to learning, so that more pupils are engaged in their learning
 - improving the school’s arrangements for dealing with bullying and ensuring that these are understood by pupils and their parents
 - increasing pupils’ confidence in all staff to deal effectively with their concerns about bullying.
- Improve the leadership in the early years by checking closely that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is helping them to make accelerated progress from their starting points.
- External reviews of governance and of the school’s use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 22 May 2018 to 23 May 2018

Evidence

Inspectors met with the interim executive headteacher, three assistant headteachers, several middle and subject leaders and other staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the interim governing body and the interim chief executive officer for the Link Education Trust. Inspectors spoke with parents at the beginning of the day and with pupils informally at breaktimes, as well as meeting with groups of pupils. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and during lessons.

Inspectors visited classes, some jointly with the interim executive headteacher and an assistant headteacher, across different subjects and year groups. Inspectors also examined the work in a sample of pupils' books. The inspectors scrutinised a variety of documents, including those related to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' attainment and progress, and staff performance. Plans for improvement were evaluated. Inspectors assessed the impact of leaders' actions taken since the last inspection.

Context

Since the inspection, the leader for the early years has left the school. In December 2017, the majority of trust officers for the Link Education Trust resigned. This left the school with no local governing body. An interim executive board was formed in May 2018. An interim chief executive officer for the trust has been appointed to support the school. The process has begun for the school to leave the Link Education Trust and become part of the Healing Multi-Academy Trust (HMAT) in November 2018. An interim executive headteacher has been appointed, who will become permanent in September 2018. An assistant headteacher has been promoted to the post of deputy headteacher from September 2018. The school is in the process of recruiting a new leader for the early years, who will also be another assistant headteacher.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The pace of change has been hindered by a period of turbulence within the trust. Some areas for improvement have only been addressed by leaders since January 2018, when the school was able to access effective support from the HMAT. This support is through their teaching school, the Humber Teaching School Alliance (HTSA).

School leaders are addressing effectively some of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Your plans for improvement are thorough and focused on the necessary priorities. Parents, pupils and members of staff are positive about the improvements to the school. Pupils who spoke with inspectors all agreed that they enjoy school and that teachers are, as one pupil described, 'fun and

friendly'. Parents praised the way that staff are now more available to talk to and that the quality of learning is improving. Staff value the opportunities that they now have to access more training to improve their practice.

You reacted promptly after the last inspection to ensure that pupils feel safe at school. You have ensured that considerable improvements have been made to standards of behaviour. You have trained staff to improve their management of pupils' behaviour and have introduced successful changes to the way breaktimes and lunchtimes are managed. Additional and regular staff checks on how pupils are feeling throughout the school day have enabled pupils to feel valued and to trust adults in school. For example, one pupil told me: 'If I'm worried, I can talk to my teacher, or if I don't feel ready to talk, I can write my worry down and put it in our class worry box. My teacher checks the box regularly and will come and have a quiet word with me to see if I'm okay.' Pupils have a very good understanding of the measures taken to keep them safe in school. They value the weekly reminders that you give them to ensure that they are aware of risks and safety procedures and they know who to talk to if they have concerns.

You have accessed good-quality specialist advice through the HTSA. This has enabled you to review teaching methods and draw up helpful action plans to tackle the school's weaknesses. The quality of teaching is improving. However, the significant changes in the way pupils are now taught means that some initiatives, including raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, are at an early stage of development. Their impact on pupils' attainment and progress throughout the academy cannot yet be demonstrated. Nevertheless, improvements in pupils' behaviour in lessons enable teachers to teach more effectively and for pupils to do better. The academy is now in a good position to focus on ensuring that improvements to the quality of teaching accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment.

The appointment of an interim executive headteacher in March has strengthened the leadership of the school. Middle and subject leaders have clear plans for improvement and are knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility. Leaders have made improvements to the way that information about how well pupils are achieving in different subjects is collected and evaluated to ensure that information about the progress pupils are making is accurate.

Leaders are currently reviewing systems which will better enable them to hold staff to account for the performance of different groups of pupils. Teachers who spoke with inspectors said that they are being supported well to improve their practice.

Leaders have improved systems for their monitoring and evaluating of teaching. Specialist leaders in education from the teaching school alliance have supported school leaders to improve the way that they use the information from their evaluations of teaching. Consequently, leaders have a more accurate understanding of the strengths in teaching and have taken decisive action to tackle weaknesses.

Leaders have carried out interim reviews of the actions set for teachers as part of their appraisal process in order to help teachers improve their performance. Leaders have identified that the appraisal system needs to be amended to reflect the changes that are taking place in the school, and to improve teaching and raise standards. A new, more precisely targeted appraisal process has been considered and a revised format is to be implemented from September 2018.

Leaders have effectively introduced changes to the way information is communicated to parents about their child's progress. The vast majority of parents who spoke with inspectors were positive about the information that they receive about their child. Teachers are more regularly available to talk to parents before and after school and parents have termly opportunities to formally discuss their child's progress. Parents with children who have SEN and/or disabilities felt particularly well supported and informed.

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum. The assistant headteacher with responsibility for improving the curriculum is passionate and determined to ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced. He has developed a comprehensive and appropriate plan to introduce substantial changes to both the content and the teaching of the curriculum. He has ensured that there are good quality experiences planned across a wide range of subjects to build knowledge and enhance the life experiences of pupils, particularly those pupils who are disadvantaged. The improved curriculum is to be implemented from September 2018.

Little progress has been made to improve the provision to develop pupils' understanding of British values and their knowledge of different faiths and cultures. Conversations with pupils from different year groups showed that their awareness of these areas is limited. Leaders agree that this is a key priority for the new curriculum in the new academic year.

Senior leaders have reacted promptly to improve the leadership of the early years. A specialist leader in education (SLE) for the early years from the HTSA is supporting teachers to improve the quality of both teaching and the curriculum to ensure that children make a good start to their school life. The SLE has an appropriate action plan which aims at securing rapid improvements. Leaders are in the process of appointing a new leader for the early years. This successful applicant will also serve as an assistant headteacher, in order to further strengthen the senior leadership team.

School leaders were asked to use additional funding effectively, to improve progress for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Senior leaders have further identified that the monitoring and evaluation of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is a significant area of weakness. With the support of the HTSA, a review of the impact of funding and provision is to take place as a matter of urgency.

The review of the pupil premium was delayed and has only recently been carried out. The report identifies clear suggestions for an effective strategy to improve outcomes for pupils. Leaders' actions to establish a revised plan are still at an early stage. However, they understand that they must act without delay to implement the suggested strategies to enable pupils entitled to the additional funding to make good progress.

An external review of governance has not yet taken place. Shortly after the previous inspection, the majority of the trustees resigned and only three trustees remained. Governance of the school was therefore ineffective. In March 2018, an interim chief executive officer was appointed to the Link Education Trust and he began the process of establishing an interim executive board of governors. The board met for the first time at the beginning of May. The chair of the board is an experienced leader for governance. Members of the board have a range of relevant skills and knowledge that are suitable to provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. A review of governance is urgently planned to take place within the next few weeks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders have begun the process of improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers are now generally assessing the performance of pupils more accurately. However, a minority of pupils require additional support. Work in pupils' books and observations of lessons show that not all teachers use assessment information carefully to plan work that meets pupils' needs and abilities. School leaders are addressing this and providing support through the HTSA to secure consistently good teaching. They have identified that teachers' skills in assessing pupils' work needs further development. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work and observations in lessons showed that the way teachers use assessment information to plan work to meet pupils' needs and abilities is inconsistent across classes and year groups. School leaders are committed to tackling underperformance, and they provide targeted feedback and training to teachers through the HTSA to help them improve.

At the last inspection, teachers were asked to ensure that they provide prompt help when pupils are struggling to understand what is being taught. Only limited progress has been made in this area. In lessons, teachers do not consistently address misconceptions promptly, or appropriately, to prevent pupils becoming confused or repeating mistakes. In books, misconceptions are often overlooked by teachers and pupils then repeat mistakes.

The leaders for English have trained staff in a new approach to the teaching of reading. After initial trials of the approach in some year groups, it is now being introduced across the school. Good-quality texts have been purchased to motivate pupils to read. Teachers use these texts to plan topics of work that interest pupils. Whole-class reading comprehension lessons are encouraging pupils to have a better

understanding of the texts that they read. Reading challenges and rewards are inspiring pupils to read more regularly at home and in school. The English leaders are clear about how they want to develop pupils' reading skills further and improve outcomes in reading for all pupils.

Work to develop pupils' writing skills is at an early stage of development. Pupils in key stage 2 are encouraged to edit and improve their writing to include specific features for different audiences. However, the impact on the quality of pupils' work is inconsistent. Minimal improvements have been made to the quality of pupils' writing in key stage 1. Too often, pupils' writing in key stage 1 is difficult to read and does not make sense.

Actions taken to improve teaching and learning in mathematics are having a positive impact. Most teachers are beginning to plan more opportunities for pupils to solve problems and develop their reasoning skills. They make good use of resources and visual imagery to make learning meaningful and relevant to everyday life. However, such practice is not evident in all classes. The leader for mathematics has closely monitored and evaluated the quality of teaching in the subject. From this, she has developed an action plan which includes training staff in order to improve their knowledge and skills. This training is due to take place in June and is a key priority for the next academic year.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

You have effectively addressed the issues with pupils' behaviour identified at the last inspection. Behaviour around school is managed well by staff. Pupils generally demonstrate good attitudes to learning. In lessons, inspectors saw no incidents of low-level disruption by pupils. However, some pupils did lose concentration when work was not well matched to their earlier learning.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors were united in their opinion that behaviour across the school has improved. They say that you set clear expectations and when incidents of poor behaviour or bullying do occur, staff deal with them quickly and fairly. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. They explained to me that you ensure that they are given regular opportunities to talk about any worries that they may have. They were confident that they now know who they can talk to if they feel worried.

Pupils praised the new arrangements at breaktimes and lunchtimes, which mean, as one pupil put it, 'less fall outs and more fun'. Parents who spoke with inspectors were very positive about the improvements made in the way that the school responds to incidents of poor behaviour and bullying. They say that staff are approachable and deal with issues well.

Improvements to the way behaviour is managed by staff have led to a significant reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions. There have been no exclusions

since January 2018.

School leaders were asked to improve the attendance of pupils, including those in the early years, by developing more effective ways of working with parents. Leaders check attendance and punctuality carefully. They identify children with persistent absence and work with their families to improve attendance. This work includes home visits by the family support worker.

You have introduced a range of measures to promote the importance of good attendance with parents and pupils, including class and individual rewards. The breakfast club has successfully enabled parents to drop their children off earlier at school, and this has helped some pupils to attend more regularly. The introduction of the 'fun bus', which collects pupils who would otherwise struggle to get to school on time, has improved the attendance of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils.

The overall attendance of all pupils has improved, but the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, although improved, remains higher than the national average. It is vital that leaders, including the governing board, closely review the causes of persistent absence of pupils in these groups as well as the impact of strategies to improve attendance.

External support

Since January 2018, The Humber Teaching School Alliance has provided effective and accurately targeted support to the school. The HMAT has acted to further strengthen the leadership of the school through the appointment of an interim executive headteacher.