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Caroline Down
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Dear Mrs Down

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Luke's School

Following my visit with Jen Edwards and Paula Marsh, Ofsted inspectors, to your school on 12 and 13 June 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 third 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 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 third monitoring inspection on 12 June 2018 to 13 June 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 one session where a pupil was being taught by an external provider.

Inspectors reviewed documentation and met with the acting principal, senior leaders, members of staff and the chair of the interim executive board (IEB). One inspector met with a senior officer of the local authority and the chief executive of the identified academy sponsor who continue to provide external support to the school under a service level agreement.

Context

The school remains the responsibility of the local authority. The academy order, issued in January 2017, has not yet been enacted. It is anticipated that the school will become an academy in the autumn term. The service level agreement between the local authority and the potential sponsor to provide external support remains in place.

A full staffing review has been undertaken with a number of staff leaving the school in April and several more are due to leave at the end of the summer term. A further programme of staff changes is currently taking place.

The number of pupils on roll remains stable. However, the number of pupils attending alternative provision has reduced significantly. The proportion of pupils on part-time timetables has fallen sharply.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders, members of the IEB and the local authority have not increased the pace of change sufficiently since the previous monitoring inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the progress that pupils make remain poor. Although leaders have made improvements to ensure that pupils are safe, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning have not improved sufficiently.

Leaders have yet to draft an action plan that sets out the measures that will ensure that the school no longer requires special measures.

Leaders have made very few changes to the curriculum since the previous monitoring inspection. Consequently, it remains unfit for purpose. A new curriculum is being planned for September 2018 but too much store is being set in the

potential this may bring. However, pupils currently in the school have not benefited from a curriculum that meets their needs.

Allied to this, a significant proportion of staff members have been absent from school. Leaders have struggled to recruit staff to cover these absences and so in some subjects, for example in mathematics, many pupils have not had a suitably qualified teacher for a considerable period of time. As a result, pupils have not made the progress they should have.

Leaders introduced a new assessment and marking policy early in the summer term. However, this has not been implemented successfully. Leaders also put in place some testing of pupils' reading skills and some pupils in key stage 3 have undertaken some cognitive ability assessments. The results of these assessments are not being used by class teachers when planning learning. There is still no comprehensive understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do across subjects or of their therapeutic needs. Consequently, IEB members do not have information about the progress that pupils make. There is an inconsistent approach to monitoring progress and there is no coherent plan in place to improve the school's assessment system.

Teachers now have a better understanding of some pupils' personal needs which they are using to help pupils manage their emotions better.

The reviews of the impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch up funding have been carried out. IEB members have reviewed the findings and note that there is no evidence to show the impact of either fund in 2016/2017. A pupil premium plan is in place which gives a rationale for the allocation of funding but the plan lacks integrity. In some cases the actions link to the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face. However, for others, they do not. There are no mechanisms in place to evaluate the impact this funding has. No plan has yet been agreed for the spending of the Year 7 catch-up funding.

The support for pupils and their families at times of crises continues to be strong. The proportion of pupils on part-time timetables is reducing and those who are on part-time timetables are increasing their hours in school, but not quickly enough. This is especially the case for pupils in Year 10, where many pupils attend for slightly more than half of the school week.

Leaders can account for the whereabouts of each and every pupil during the school day. When pupils are at home, members of staff are checking that they are there and they are safe.

The teaching of pupils to keep themselves safe remains underdeveloped.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment remain poor.

Too often, teachers do not plan learning that gives due regard to pupils' education, health and care plans. Teachers still do not have a strong enough understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do and so there has been little improvement since the previous inspection.

Teachers' expectations remain too low in too many subjects. Therefore, learning is still not sufficiently well planned to ensure that pupils make the progress that they should. This is not the case in all subjects, for example in design technology, pupils were actively and productively involved in creating household objects from wood and in innovation projects which used pupils' interests and built on previous learning. When learning is well planned and builds on pupils' interests, progress is strong.

Although pupils still absent themselves from class, this is less frequent. This is because new intervention strategies are successful in helping pupils to manage their own behaviour. However, many members of teaching staff do not plan their lessons to engage and interest pupils.

The impact of teaching assistants remains variable. Generally, teaching assistants are used to support pupils when they are distressed, but their impact on helping pupils to make progress in their studies continues to be limited. Some teaching assistants apply the training they have received to help pupils manage their own emotions. Overall, teaching assistants' expectations of pupils' conduct and progress are not high enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

There has been one permanent exclusion since the last monitoring inspection. The number of fixed-term exclusions has continued to increase. In part, this can be attributed to more assiduous recording of exclusions. Nevertheless, too many pupils still misbehave to such an extent that they cannot stay in school. Absconding from the school site is now rare.

Overall, pupils are attending school more regularly, but this is still well below the levels seen typically in special schools nationally. Two thirds of pupils do not attend school on a regular basis. Leaders are ensuring that absences are routinely followed up. However, leaders have not ensured that any actions taken to improve attendance at school are effective.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, leaders are now monitoring the rates at which pupils access the school's support centre. Their monitoring lacks the detail of analysis that is needed and so there is still no strategic overview of the effectiveness of this provision.

The need to physically intervene when pupils are distressed has reduced. Generally, these incidents are recorded well and staff are suitably trained. There is still a need to ensure that the agreed intervention plans are shared and understood by all members of staff.

Approximately a third of the pupils in Year 10 have work experience as part of their curriculum. Their placement is carefully selected, well planned and monitored. Members of staff have supported Year 11 pupils well in their applications for further study. Most have been successful in securing places to continue their education when they leave the school. Those who do not have places at local colleges subject to them gaining the necessary qualifications.

Leaders have not yet ensured that pupils in key stage 3 receive the careers guidance that they need.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' outcomes in English, mathematics and science show limited signs of improvement. In classes, inspectors observed pupils working at low levels. Work was poorly matched to pupils' needs. Teaching staff do not swiftly tackle misconceptions or errors and so pupils are unable to progress on to more challenging work successfully in these subjects.

In English, pupils' work shows that there is no consistent approach to teaching of reading. Pupils do not write regularly. When they are required to write, pupils have an overdependence on adults to scribe for them. Pupils do not demonstrate a good understanding of how to correctly spell or punctuate their work. Leaders recognise the need for a consistent approach to literacy development across the school, but this is not yet in place.

The most able pupils show they have the ability to analyse and evaluate the texts that they read to the standard expected for their age. However, this is not reflected in their writing.

Due to staff absence, pupils have made little progress in their mathematics.

External support

The main focus of the support continues to be to provide leadership capacity, including the secondment of the principal. Leaders from the multi-academy trust supporting the school have assisted leaders in the recruitment of new leaders. The seconded principal has been successful in ensuring that pupils are safer.

The support for teaching and learning has not been sufficient to bring about the changes that are urgently needed.

While there is a detailed service level agreement between the multi-academy trust and the local authority, the local authority have not ensured that the agreement has been fulfilled as specified.