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Mrs Karen Blackburn
Acting Headteacher
Heaton Manor School
Jesmond Park West
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
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Dear Mrs Blackburn

Special measures monitoring inspection of Heaton Manor School

Following my visit to your school on 4 and 5 July 2018, with Shelley Heseltine and Catherine Garton, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 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 November 2016.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint up to five newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of Gosforth Federated Academies (GFA), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2016

- Urgently improve leadership and management in both the main school and sixth form, by:
 - reviewing senior leadership roles and responsibilities so that they align tightly to the school's priorities
 - providing consistent support and challenge for faculty leaders so that they are held to account for the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility
 - providing better training for teachers, particularly with regard to improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - strengthening the management of teachers' performance
 - more frequently monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on the progress of different groups of pupils, including learners in the sixth form
 - thoroughly evaluating the impact of the pupil premium and catch-up funding for literacy and numeracy
 - ensuring governors more systematically track the school's performance against agreed performance indicators.
- Urgently improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to secure more rapid progress, by:
 - matching learning activities more precisely to pupils' starting points
 - ensuring teachers consistently challenge errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - ensuring assessment information is sufficiently reliable and accurate so that good quality additional support can be quickly provided to pupils that fall behind.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance, by:
 - ensuring all members of staff apply the behaviour management policy consistently
 - providing better support to develop effective behaviour management strategies for those teachers that need it
 - focusing efforts more sharply on improving attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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 first monitoring inspection on 4 July 2018 to 5 July 2018

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, other senior leaders, governors, staff and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive and chair of the trustees from GFA. Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding arrangements and scrutinised the system to check that adults in the school are safe to work with children. The school's and local authority's plans were evaluated, and inspectors appraised several documents, including external reviews of governance, the school's use of the pupil premium and other school documents relating to the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Leaders conducted joint observations in lessons with inspectors. In total, inspectors visited 40 lessons during the inspection, including lessons in the specialist resource base for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The inspection team talked to pupils formally and informally at break, lunchtime and at the end of the school day. Inspectors took into account the 223 responses from parents and carers who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a parent and considered additional correspondence received via email. Inspectors' activities during this inspection focused mainly on pupils' behaviour and attendance, when evaluating pupils' personal development, behaviour and well-being.

Context

Since the school was judged to require special measures, the headteacher has left. In January 2017, the local authority was swift to broker leadership support, for two terms, from a nearby national support school. The regional schools commissioner approved an academy order, with GFA as the preferred sponsor. Following this, an acting headteacher was seconded in September 2017. An additional acting deputy headteacher and part-time leader of teaching and learning were seconded at the same time. Since then, there have been changes to subject leadership in the humanities department. A number of governors resigned following the previous inspection and their positions were not filled. Currently, two governors hold the position of joint chair of the governing body.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the appointment of the acting headteacher in September 2017, the school has improved at a rapid pace. The acting headteacher asked more of her staff and pupils and received a positive response. She has effectively managed to address significant weaknesses in the school's provision that negatively impacted on pupils' progress for several years. The acting headteacher has not sought to impose new systems and processes on staff. Indeed, she has actively engaged staff in the

decision-making process by carefully describing the rationale behind new ways of working, and accompanying staff when they visit other schools to observe the benefits of other behaviour management models. Staff morale is high. They have welcomed the increased responsibility and accountability because they have witnessed the dramatic effect their actions have had on pupils' attitudes to learning over a short period of time.

Senior and subject leadership roles have been reviewed and refined. Leaders better understand their own areas of responsibility and teachers know who to speak to if they need support or advice. Furthermore, the management of teachers' performance has been improved so that the targets they are given closely match school and departmental priorities.

Leaders' actions have secured significant improvements in the standards of pupils' behaviour since the introduction of the new 'praise' behaviour management system in October 2017. Teachers are effusive in their approval of the new system of rewards and sanctions. They say that they now spend far less time dealing with instances of poor behaviour in class and around school.

The school's improvement plan details a wide range of actions or 'things that need to happen' that leaders believe will help the school to move forward. While there is still much to do, leaders' strategic approach to their work is helping to ensure that pupils receive stronger teaching and their behaviour improves quickly. Even so, leaders acknowledge that improvement plans could be sharper. For example, current plans do not include 'milestones' by which progress can be evaluated, and it is not always clear by whom, when and how progress will be monitored.

Subject leaders receive appropriate direction by way of a detailed monitoring and leadership calendar. They fully understand what senior leaders expect from them. The closer links between subject and senior leaders have swiftly contributed to a situation where all leaders are 'pulling in the same direction'.

Members of the governing body chose not to advertise recent governor vacancies. This was due to the expected move to become an academy. However, the process has been prolonged, and governors say that they spend more time than they would like discussing academisation when they would prefer to discuss other, more pertinent, issues. The school commissioned an external review of governance following the appointment of the acting headteacher. Following the review, members of the governing body created a bespoke 'governor action plan' aimed at addressing the issues highlighted in the previous inspection and subsequent review. Scrutiny of the minutes from governing body meetings demonstrates that governors now ask more searching questions of leaders and request evidence to support leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness.

A new leader with responsibility for disadvantaged pupils was appointed from within the senior leadership team in October 2017. This, and the review of pupil premium

funding completed in January 2018, is belatedly helping to secure some marginal improvements in current disadvantaged pupils' progress. Notwithstanding this, leaders do not yet know which existing strategies are having the most impact on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, especially in relation to attendance. Therefore, disadvantaged pupils continue to attend less often and achieve below others nationally. Inspection evidence demonstrates that leaders do not always review the impact of their actions in other aspects of the school's work.

Discussions and preparations relating to the school's transition to academy status have been unacceptably protracted. Leaders, governors and trustees from GFA are working extremely hard to overcome the final hurdles so that the school can become a sponsored academy in January 2019. Until such a time, leaders, including governors, need to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to reviewing pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving. Leaders have introduced lesson 'must haves' and clear expectations that have contributed to stronger teaching over time. They regularly monitor the quality of teaching by conducting more frequent formal and informal observations in lessons. Teachers told inspectors that they are provided with increasing opportunities to learn from each other. Furthermore, through the links with Gosforth Academy, teachers at both schools take part in reciprocal visits to share ideas and improve their skills in the classroom. Consequently, teachers at Heaton Manor are becoming increasingly confident to trial new ideas in the classroom. Whole-staff training has ensured that most teachers now use pupils' prior assessment information to plan to meet pupils' differing needs. However, leaders have identified that current systems for assessing pupils at key stage 3 are limited and do not provide teachers with accurate and comparable information about pupils' understanding. Accordingly, leaders have developed new assessment policies that they intend to introduce in September.

Teachers have increased their expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly for pupils with below-average starting points or pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, pupils were accurately and enthusiastically analysing William Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. They were confidently volunteering answers, following astute questioning by the teacher, which highlighted their detailed understanding of Shakespeare's literary techniques, including the use of soliloquies.

Support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including for pupils who have a hearing impairment, is highly effective. Inspectors observed specialist teaching assistants working and signing with pupils in class, which allowed the lesson to progress seamlessly without interruption. Additionally, teachers often use eye contact to promote communication with pupils.

At the time of the last inspection, teachers did not consistently challenge errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar and this was highlighted as an area for improvement. Inspection evidence demonstrates that some teachers do this often, particularly in English and science. However, leaders agree that in their quest to improve more significant aspects of the school's provision, other areas have not yet received the attention they require: pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar is one example. Leaders have appointed a literacy coordinator, who is beginning to formulate plans and ideas that will contribute to teachers' work in this area.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that all members of staff apply the behaviour management policy consistently. During that inspection, a minority of staff believed established systems to manage pupils' behaviour were too intricate and/or confusing. Indeed, one middle leader described systems as 'labyrinthine'. Consequently, during the 2017 spring and summer terms, the interim leadership rightly endeavoured to improve the standard of behaviour by simplifying the school's approach to dealing with pupils who displayed less positive attitudes to their learning. This approach assisted the new acting headteacher when she and other leaders introduced the 'praise' system. Pupils are now provided with a clear set of rules and expectations that, as one member of staff said, 'are always adhered to but never backed down from'. A very small minority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, voiced their concern in relation to pupils' behaviour. However, the vast majority of pupils and staff spoke very highly of the new approach to behaviour, saying that the time had come to 'draw a line in the sand'. During the inspection, pupils happily engaged with each other and moved sensibly around the extensive site in a mature manner. They arrived at lessons on time and came prepared to learn. Nearly all pupils presented their all-important planner on entry and exit from lessons so that they could receive reward stamps for upholding the high standards teachers now expect from them. Staff told inspectors, without exception, that the new behaviour management system was the single most important change that had occurred in the school recently. More than one teacher suggested that this was because they were now able to do their job: teach.

However, the new robust and consistent approach to pupils' behaviour has created some unintended consequences. A significant minority of pupils continue to flout the rules and, as a result, the proportion of pupils who are excluded for a fixed period has increased. Leaders are confident that the number of pupils who are excluded will reduce soon. Nevertheless, information provided by the school demonstrates that this has not yet started to happen.

The increasing number of exclusions is also contributing to increasing rates of pupils' absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is much higher than it has been previously and remains significantly

higher than average. Leaders are less clear about the extent to which pupils who receive an exclusion contribute to the overall attendance figures. This is because a new team of staff with responsibility for increasing pupils' attendance was only created in the last few weeks. Therefore, procedures to track and support pupils are in their infancy.

Outcomes for pupils

Published performance information for Year 11 pupils in 2017 highlights that pupils made considerably less progress than others nationally in many of their subjects, including English, modern foreign languages and humanities. This was despite this group of pupils entering the school in Year 7 with above-average attainment from their primary schools. When compared to other pupils nationally, Year 11 disadvantaged pupils in 2017 made progress that was nearly one grade below the national average. This is a decrease of approximately half a grade from 2016.

Inspection evidence demonstrates that when teachers effectively use pupils' prior assessment information to inform their planning, the activities pupils are asked to complete are tailored to meet their specific needs. This, in addition to the stronger work ethos that is starting to pervade the school, is leading to current pupils making improving rates of progress in a broad range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

External support

The preferred sponsor (GFA) has provided, and continues to provide, considerable support to the school in a wide range of areas. The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have been seconded from Gosforth Academy. The chair of the trustees from GFA attends governing body meetings, as does the chief executive officer. Leaders from the preferred sponsor have consulted with staff and introduced several new ways of working in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. Consistent systems and calendars have been implemented or developed ready for the new academic year. Leaders from Heaton Manor have recently worked closely with staff from other local schools and universities to develop literacy projects and investigate alternative ways to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The local authority has provided specialist human resources (HR) support in the past year.

Members of the governing body have stated that the support from the proposed sponsor has been invaluable since September 2017. Both governors and the sponsor are dedicated to concluding discussions in relation to academy conversion so that the recent signs of improvement can be accelerated.