

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Scott Burnside
Chaucer School
Wordsworth Avenue
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S5 8NH

Dear Mr Burnside

Special measures monitoring inspection of Chaucer School

Following my visit with Steve Shaw, Her Majesty's Inspector, Peter Cole, Ofsted Inspector and Andrew Cummings, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 11 July 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 fifth 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - leaders develop an accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
 - improvement plans include sharp and precise outcomes throughout the year so that progress can be measured and leaders at all levels are held accountable for bringing about change
 - leaders at all levels are able to accurately evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through linking it closely with the impact it has on pupils' outcomes
 - subject leaders are accurate in judging how well pupils are achieving
 - all teachers follow the school marking and assessment policy so that all pupils are clear about what they need to do next and can act on teacher comments and advice
 - additional funding, including pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, is used effectively to reduce the gaps in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils needing to catch up.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - leaders establish where the best teaching is taking place and share this across the school
 - accurate assessment information is used across all year groups to enable teachers to plan work that fully meets the learning needs of different groups of pupils so that outcomes improve
 - teachers check carefully on the progress pupils are making so that they are clear about any pupils' misconceptions and misunderstandings
 - leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are closely linked to detailed review of the progress that pupils are making in all subjects
 - all teachers have high expectations for all pupils and only accept work that is presented to a high standard and completed.
- Improve behaviour and safety substantially by:
 - quickly tackling poor behaviour in lessons so that all pupils are able to work without interruption and are supported by teachers who consistently follow the school's behaviour and discipline system
 - further improving attendance and reducing the number of pupils excluded from the school so that they are at least in line with national averages.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 11 July 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the chief executive of the trust, groups of pupils, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, senior leaders, middle leaders and staff. Inspectors evaluated the quality of pupils' work alongside senior leaders. Inspectors also reviewed policies and documents associated with safeguarding.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in January 2018, there have been several changes to staffing at the school. Some roles within the senior leadership team have changed. There is a new designated safeguarding lead, a new person responsible for behaviour and a new person responsible for attendance. There are three new teach first trainees joining the school in September and the current three trainees remain into their newly qualified teacher year. Two newly qualified teachers have been appointed in art and science and a recently qualified teacher in art and design. A highly experienced teacher has joined the school from the trust in mathematics for four days per week. Two science teachers from across the trust are working in the school for one day per week each. There have been two appointments, one internal and one external, to the role of second in department for English.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Trust and school leaders, alongside governors, continue to collaborate and work effectively together to ensure that the quality of education and outcomes for pupils continue to improve. Further work to evaluate the quality of education in the school is taking place and is resulting in a much improved and more accurate view of the school. Leaders are moving towards a more detailed format which is allowing them to think, and consider carefully, further actions to ensure school improvement.

Middle leaders are increasingly confident and accurate in evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning in their departments. They carefully review the progress pupils make and are focusing more on key groups. This means that they have a strong overview of what needs to improve. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the most able pupils achieve standards of which they are capable.

Leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning now link closely to the progress pupils make. This is helping leaders to identify training needs and plan development opportunities for staff. In line with the trust, new initiatives for

improving teaching and learning are in place and are beginning to enable teachers to reflect on and improve their own teaching.

Leaders with responsibility for additional funding for pupils who are disadvantaged, for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and for those who need to catch up, are ensuring that these funds are being spent more appropriately to address the needs of pupils. However, there is further work to do to ensure that actions are evaluated, particularly in improving attendance and behaviour.

Governors' reviews of the support put in place to help underperforming teachers are ensuring that systems are in place to enable rapid improvement. This is leading to better teaching across the school.

The trust is ensuring that opportunities for staff to support and learn from one another are in place. There is a weekly meeting for trust secondary headteachers in which decisions are made, for example in determining where support is needed and how best to deploy this. Teachers and middle leaders ensure that they share and model good practice. This is supported by the trust development of 'communities of practice' which allows time for this to happen. Core improvement groups are in place within the school to provide extra challenge and support, for example to improve attendance and behaviour. These groups ensure that there is accountability at all levels for school improvement.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is continuing to improve. This is now reflected in the quality of work pupils produce in their workbooks. Pupils take much more pride in their presentation. Regular assessment and application of school policies are helping pupils make better progress and build on their prior learning. Pupils have a greater awareness of how well they are doing.

Pupils' literacy skills are improving. Literacy is checked frequently, which is enabling pupils to learn from their mistakes. There are an increasing number of opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum, which is supporting pupils to develop the skills that they learn in English lessons. Pupils who need to catch up with literacy and numeracy receive support through a number of interventions and this is helping them to catch up to their peers.

Pupils are becoming increasingly interested in learning. Attitudes to learning are more positive than in the previous inspection and pupils demonstrate a greater understanding of the importance of school. There remains further work to do to make sure that all pupils are developing this understanding and approach to their learning.

Teachers' use of pupils' assessment information to inform their planning is improving. Teachers are using the more accurate information that is available to

them to begin to personalise learning to meet pupils' individual needs. There is further work to do to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging, particularly for pupils who are the most able.

Systems for assessment are now aligned with those across the trust and there is a planned common assessment across all subjects and year groups. Moderation and standardisation take place regularly and this ensures that assessment, particularly at key stage 4, is accurate.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Following the well-managed introduction of a refined behaviour for learning policy in February this year, pupils' behaviour in lessons is calmer. Teachers are managing behaviour while reducing interruption to the flow of learning, meaning pupils can continue to make progress. School information shows that the number of pupils who are disrupting lessons is decreasing and pupils say that behaviour is improving. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of the new policy.

Leaders have put in place a pre-exclusion learning, inclusion and support system to help pupils who are at risk of receiving a fixed-term exclusion. The system ensures that pupils receive support and continue with their school work so that they do not fall behind in their learning. Although fixed-term exclusions remain, as a result of this system, the number of fixed-term exclusions is reducing. It is too soon to see the full impact of the new system.

Pupils are friendly, polite and genuinely interested in visitors who are in the school. Behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime is improving, and most pupils are orderly as they move around school. Some pupils, however, do not arrive punctually to lessons at the end of breaktime and lunchtime. Leaders are aware of this and are addressing it.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and have someone to speak to if they need help. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. School leaders are aware of issues within the locality of the school and work hard to support and educate pupils to overcome challenges and face risks. Pupils say that they, 'leave outside issues at the gate'. Pupils are focusing more on their learning than they did previously.

Pupils' attendance remains a key issue for school leaders. Following a review in March 2018, leaders with responsibility for attendance are implementing new strategies to improve pupils' presence in school. For example, they ensure that the role of the form tutor is clear and that form tutors know their responsibilities in tackling pupils' absence. Leaders are also ensuring that action is taken sooner. An enhanced report has been trialled with Year 8 pupils and has improved the attendance of most pupils who attended poorly in the past. Leaders accept that pupils' attendance must remain a priority and there is continuing work to do to improve it.

Outcomes for pupils

School progress information shows, and the work in pupils' books supports, that pupils are making better progress since the previous inspection. This is particularly the case for pupils in key stage 3. Pupils in key stage 4 are making better progress than they have in previous academic years and teachers and leaders continue to work hard with pupils to ensure that they have every opportunity to achieve well.

Progress information for pupils in Year 11 indicates that pupils are likely to make better progress than they did when they were in key stage 3. Although there have been in-year fluctuations in progress, pupils are in a stronger position to achieve more successfully than previous Year 11 pupils.

External support

School leaders continue to embrace opportunities to work with schools outside of the trust so that they continue to develop skills and expertise. For example, school leaders have visited other trusts to develop ideas and strategies for improving alternative provision, attendance and behaviour.

The school has joined the transforming schools pilot project and is also working alongside an education adviser from the Department for Education. The trust commissioned an external review of attendance in March 2018.