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17 October 2018

Mr S Evans  
Interim Headteacher  
New Leaf Centre  
Pelsall Lane  
Rushall  
Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS4 1NG

Dear Mr Evans

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of New Leaf Centre**

Following my visit with Peter Humphries, Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 2 October 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 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 April 2018.

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 not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2018.**

- Take urgent steps to ensure that all pupils are taught in a safe environment by:
  - ensuring that all buildings are fit for purpose, adequately cleaned and maintained
  - updating risk assessments and safeguarding training records
  - identifying and supporting the behavioural needs of each pupil
  - arranging further training for staff on managing pupil behaviour.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - resolving the inadequate governance arrangements
  - securing stability in senior leadership
  - securing permanent staffing arrangements
  - revising the curriculum at each key stage so that it meets the needs of pupils
  - making sure that the provision for disadvantaged pupils meets their needs
  - securing effective support from the local authority.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - assessing the pupils' level of attainment when they start school and matching programmes of study to the needs of each pupil
  - supplying teachers and pupils with sufficient resources
  - organising training for staff who work outside of their specialism
  - meeting the identified needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Tackle poor attendance and attitudes of pupils by:
  - monitoring and addressing the incidence and nature of pupils' absence more carefully
  - devising a strategy to improve pupils' attendance, which includes rewards as well as sanctions
  - making sure that pupils and staff understand what is acceptable behaviour
  - ensuring that staff act quickly, resolutely and consistently when pupils' behaviour is unacceptable
  - strengthening the system for rewarding good behaviour.
- Check the arrangements for alternative provision more carefully so the needs of pupils are met by:
  - reviewing the quality of each placement and its relevance for each pupil, including removing pupils from any provision that may be operating illegally
  - conducting regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning in these provisions
  - evaluating the impact of alternative provision in improving pupils' attendance and progress

- supporting key stage 4 pupils in achieving recognised GCSE qualifications.

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 funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 2 October 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the leader of the key stage 4 provision, two groups of teachers and teaching assistants, administrative staff, the chair of the management committee and a representative from the local authority (LA). The monitoring inspection focused mainly on the first and fourth areas for improvement – those related to safeguarding and to improving behaviour and attendance. The inspection took place at the New Leaf site. No key stage 4 pupils were visited during this inspection, although aspects of the provision being made for them were evaluated.

### **Context**

The interim headteacher has been in post since May 2018, having first joined the school as a seconded senior leader part-way through the spring term 2018. The number of pupils on roll has fallen to 124, from 142 at the time of the previous inspection. The majority of these pupils – 78 – are in key stage 4 and receive all their education through off-site alternative provision. The primary site has been permanently closed. All primary pupils now attend the main New Leaf site with the key stage 3 pupils. The majority of staff who work at the New Leaf site have joined the school since September 2018 and are on fixed-term contracts or employed through an agency. A member of staff is seconded to the pupil referral unit (PRU) from a local secondary school for two days a week to act as the designated safeguarding lead (DSL).

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The interim headteacher has taken a number of important actions, which are beginning to have a positive impact on settling the key stage 1, 2, and 3 pupils who attend the New Leaf site, and helping to ensure that they are safe. He has gained the trust of staff, who are working well as a team. The interim headteacher has a calm and visible presence around the PRU, which is helping to create a more positive climate for learning. He is working effectively with the key stage 4 leader to make much-needed improvements to this part of the provision.

The interim headteacher, well supported by the DSL, has put in place some much-needed basic systems and structures to improve safeguarding. These are helping the PRU to identify pupils' safeguarding needs and to respond more quickly and appropriately to them. Leaders now know which pupils are receiving help from external agencies and who to contact when they are concerned. Children in need and those on the child protection register are prioritised when checking on non-attendance and following this up.

Closing the unsuitable primary site and bringing the pupils onto the main New Leaf site was a sensible move that leaders and staff all say have made the younger pupils safer. Physical intervention, for example, is now used infrequently because staff are not isolated and can receive help when they need it, so incidents tend not to escalate in the way that they did.

Staff have received appropriate training on how to record child protection incidents and all, including temporary staff, have attended a range of safeguarding training sessions together. In discussion with inspectors, staff were able to articulate what they had learned from their recent training, and how they had altered aspects of their work in response. The interim headteacher is developing a more informative process for the induction of staff who join during the term, including clear written information to back up what staff are told verbally.

Leaders now have a much clearer picture of the provision offered to each key stage 4 pupil. Crucially, the key stage 4 leader knows where each pupil is each day and whether the provider is or is not registered. She is clear about the overall curriculum that pupils are being offered each week and if they are being given the chance to gain qualifications. The alternative providers used for key stage 4 pupils have all been offered safeguarding training, and representatives from all but one have attended. Follow-up work has taken place with the provider that did not attend. The LA commissioned a consultant to undertake an audit of each provider's safety and suitability. This audit indicated that basic requirements were met. However, it is not clear how or when leaders will check whether the provider continues to be safe and suitable.

Leaders have improved the monitoring of attendance. Previously, leaders did not have accurate information about which pupils were on the PRU's roll and who should be where on any given day. This information is now clear. Follow-up on absence at the New Leaf site is suitable and prompt.

Monitoring of the key stage 4 pupils' attendance is also much improved. Alternative providers are expected to submit attendance information to one of the key stage 4 key workers twice a day. The key stage 4 leader reports that this information is routinely received. The key worker then follows up on any absence. The education welfare officer provides valuable support when needed. However, the PRU is hampered by a lack of staff for the key stage 4 provision. The key workers are each responsible for around 40 pupils, which means that pupils receive little individual attention to support them to attend their alternative provision and to achieve when there. This situation is not satisfactory and needs urgent action.

Actual attendance across the PRU, at 60%, is very low. Register coding was previously inaccurate so this figure represents a true baseline from which to measure improvement. Importantly, leaders have cut down significantly on the use of part-time timetables. The majority of pupils are now offered full-time provision and are expected to attend it. However, for some pupils, this is a big change, and not all are responding well.

Staffing remains turbulent but is beginning to settle as more staff have fixed-term contracts rather than being employed on a daily basis. Staff who work at the New Leaf site say that they feel well supported by the interim headteacher and feel part of a proper team. Primary staff, who previously felt isolated, think that the move to the New Leaf site is a significant improvement. Staff noted that basic teaching resources are now readily available, which has not been the case in the past.

The SENCo has a very clear vision, shared by the interim headteacher, for how the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities should be developed in the PRU. She has rightly recognised that many pupils have previously unidentified and unmet SEN. Pupils' needs are now being assessed on entry to the New Leaf site, including diagnostic testing for particular difficulties such as dyslexia where needed. Crucially, leaders are starting to work on how best to support the many pupils who are not competent readers. Key stage 4 pupils are undergoing baseline assessments at their alternative placements but it is unclear how any SEN will be identified or met for these pupils.

Leaders often receive little information about pupils when they join the PRU. This hampers both the extent to which pupils' academic and personal needs can be quickly met and the accuracy of risk assessments. The local authority is aware of this issue and is committed to improving it as a matter of urgency.

At the time of the previous inspection there was no management committee. A full management committee is now in place. The chair is a member of the local authority's leadership team. She has quickly become familiar with the PRU and is providing the interim headteacher with good support and challenge. The other members of the management committee also have valuable skills and experience. Meetings have an appropriate focus on the urgent issues that need to be tackled. Training for the new committee is planned to take place imminently.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was not evaluated in any depth during this inspection. However, it was clear from visits to lessons and discussions with staff that the calmer atmosphere for the primary and key stage 3 pupils is now enabling teaching to take place at the New Leaf site. More pupils are beginning to focus on learning. The interim headteacher has started to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. This monitoring is being used to inform subsequent training and support, which teachers value and appreciate.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

The interim headteacher has set a clear direction for the way in which behaviour should be managed in the PRU, which he models well. There is an emphasis on understanding that many undesirable behaviours are a form of communication. Staff have received some recent training. They are talking about the approach that

the interim headteacher wants and putting it into practice effectively. The initial impact is a less confrontational approach, fewer negative behaviour incidents and a calmer school.

During the inspection, most pupils at the New Leaf site were in their lessons for most of the time they were meant to be. Where pupils were upset and out of class they were supported and quickly returned. At breaktime and lunchtime, clear routines were evident and the pupils responded well. A choice of activities, including board games and sports, gave pupils a choice of whether to socialise or to have some quiet time. Proper attention is paid to pupils' well-being. Breakfast is provided at the start of the day and all pupils can have a hot lunch, which was not the case in the past.

As already noted, attendance is very low. The PRU's monitoring information shows that so far this term around two thirds of pupils have improved their attendance compared to their attendance in 2017/18. While there is a long way to go, this is a positive start.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Pupils' academic outcomes were not evaluated during this inspection.

### **External support**

The LA school improvement adviser is providing effective support for the interim headteacher. She frequently visits the PRU, which both leaders and staff appreciate. The secondment of a DSL is proving very valuable, as is the appointment of the management committee chair from the LA's leadership team. Rushall Inclusion Advisory Team have provided effective support and guidance for the SENCo. The SENCo is finding this has been helpful in moving SEN support forward in the PRU.

The key stage 4 leader works directly for the LA and has improved a number of aspects of the alternative provision work. Lines of accountability for this role are unclear, however. The interim headteacher and the key stage 4 leader have a good working relationship, but the current situation regarding accountability and management is not helpful in the long term.