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Mr Barry Bridden
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Dear Mr Bridden

Special measures monitoring inspection of Rose Bridge Academy

Following my visit with Ofsted Inspector Mark Burgess to your school on 20 to 21 November 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2018. 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 Dean Trust (TDT) may appoint up to four newly qualified teachers to be deployed to teach at Rose Bridge Academy.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim academy management committee

(IAMC), chair of the board of the Community First Academy Trust (CFAT) and the chief executive officers of CFAT and TDT, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wigan. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2018.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing governance so that governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold leaders to account for the quality of education provided
 - improving the way that pupil premium funding is deployed and its impact evaluated so that disadvantaged pupils make faster progress
 - improving the accuracy and rigour of self-assessment and development planning so that leaders respond more effectively to address areas in need of improvement
 - ensuring that all teachers are held to account for the progress that pupils are making
 - embedding the school's new systems for tracking pupils' progress so that pupils, teachers and leaders have a clear understanding of how much progress pupils are making
 - widening the range of extra-curricular opportunities so that more pupils can benefit from these activities
 - making better use of the pockets of strong teaching practice that do exist to raise the overall quality of teaching across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and so rapidly improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - ensuring that teachers make better use of assessment information to plan activities which meet pupils' different needs and engage their interest
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils with different starting points and backgrounds can achieve
 - teaching and developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills more effectively across all areas of the curriculum.
- Develop pupils' behaviour by:
 - ensuring that pupils adopt consistently positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work
 - tackling persistent lateness more effectively so that pupils are punctual to school.

It is strongly recommended that the school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 second monitoring inspection on 20 to 21 November 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, a group of middle leaders and a group of other staff. Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils and had informal conversations with others in class and at other times during the school day. Meetings were held with representatives of CFAT and with a representative of TDT. An inspector met with the chair and another member of the IAMC. Inspectors observed teaching and learning for pupils in Years 7 to 11 and scrutinised a sample of pupils' written work. Inspectors considered 16 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, a senior leader has left the school and been replaced. The new postholder's responsibilities include the use of the pupil premium funding. Permanent teachers new to the school have been appointed. However, some teaching posts remain filled by temporary members of staff.

The IAMC has started to provide governance to the school.

CFAT has funded improvement to the buildings, including the provision of facilities for teaching technology. The curriculum has been redesigned to allow pupils to study for three years in key stage 3 and two years in key stage 4. Leaders have introduced a new uniform. The arrangements for pupils' daily arrival at school been changed.

The discussions between CFAT, TDT and the regional schools commissioner about the future arrangements for strategic responsibility for the school have continued. Agreement in principle that the school should change its sponsorship from CFAT to TDT has been reached.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

All those involved in the strategic leadership of the school have ensured that there has been rapid improvement. Staff and pupils express confidence in senior leaders and recognise that many aspects of school life have already changed for the better. In particular, leaders have ensured that approaches to teaching and learning are now consistent and that expectations about pupils' behaviour are very high. A sense of pride in the school has developed among teachers and pupils. Leaders' firm approach to ensuring that their high expectations were quickly followed led to some disquiet from a small number of pupils and parents early this school year. However, this has decreased as the school's improvement has become clear. Nearly two thirds of the parents who shared their views in Ofsted's Parent View survey around the

time of this inspection strongly agreed that the school is well led and managed and over four fifths would recommend the school to others.

The school's improvement plan was judged to be not fit for purpose in the first monitoring inspection. Senior leaders have completely rewritten this plan. It now provides a clear structure for ensuring that improvement happens and checking that the actions taken have been effective. Leaders regularly review the school's improvement against the plan. This has enabled them to make sure that the wide range of actions proceed apace. Senior leaders know the school, and its current strengths and weaknesses, very well.

While senior leaders have been very effective in ensuring that senior leadership has improved, middle leadership development is at an earlier stage. The impact of middle leadership is inconsistent. Middle leaders are aware of their responsibilities and are enthusiastic in their response, but sometimes lack the skills they need to be as effective as possible. Senior leaders have implemented a training programme to strengthen middle leadership. However, this is in its early stages. Other training provided by senior leaders has been very successful, for example training on teaching and learning, and safeguarding. Such training incorporates planned opportunities for teachers to see each other at work, including in video recordings, and so to learn from each other.

The IAMC started its work soon after the first monitoring inspection. It is formed of people who have relevant skills and experience in helping schools to rapidly improve. Members of the IAMC meet regularly and have quickly built up their understanding of the school. They are thorough in holding leaders to account. Trustees from both CFAT and TDT have been sensitive in ensuring that the IAMC can independently provide challenging governance. Those involved have ensured that the relationships between the trusts and the IAMC allow clear lines of responsibility and accountability.

CFAT has continued to financially invest in the school. For example, trustees have ensured that new facilities for teaching technology subjects have been provided.

A further review of the school's use of the pupil premium has been completed since the previous monitoring inspection and a new leader has been appointed to take responsibility for this area. Until recently, actions taken had not ensured that the differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others were closing quickly enough.

Senior leaders have reviewed the curriculum. They have changed the time allocated to key stages 3 and 4, returning to three years in key stage 3 and two years in key stage 4. They have determined that this will give pupils the best opportunities to build up their knowledge and skills and gain the greatest success when they eventually sit their GCSE examinations. In addition, leaders have reintroduced technology subjects and provided more time each week for modern foreign

languages in key stage 3. At the same time, they have reorganised the way pupils are allocated to teaching groups to ensure that the expectations of all pupils are high. These changes indicate senior leaders' determination that all pupils should be helped to do their very best in school and gain challenging but useful qualifications.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Pupils now benefit from teachers' consistent approaches. Leaders have introduced clear routines for learning and a common lesson structure that is used across the school. Pupils know what to expect. This gives them confidence in their learning. Pupils say that they enjoy learning and that they learn a lot.

Teachers confirmed to inspectors that teaching has continued to improve rapidly in parallel with the improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Leaders have continued the approach of using clear prompts for pupils about the activities they are expected to be doing, for example ensuring that pupils are clear about when it is time to listen to teachers talking. This is now part of daily classroom routine. The embedding of this approach has enabled teachers to use it primarily as a tool to ensure that pupils learn well, rather than to manage their behaviour in class. Teachers' questioning of pupils and building on their prior learning are now strong features of teaching. Teachers have developed the skills to include pupils in class discussion and ensure that they are challenged.

Leaders have developed a comprehensive assessment system. This includes regular collection of information about pupils' achievement. This inspection took place shortly before this information had been collected on most pupils' achievement for the first time this year. Teachers make clear to pupils what they have to achieve. Some pupils felt these expectations were not high enough because they have improved in their work.

Teachers continue to encourage pupils to read. Pupils' planners, which parents are asked to sign, include a 'reading log', as well as space for recording homework and other details. Leaders' high expectations extend to how pupils use their literacy skills when writing. Clear guidance to pupils is displayed about this around the school. However, pupils' books show that they do not follow this advice consistently, and some teachers are not sharp enough in helping pupils to correct errors in their written work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour in class has improved markedly. Inspectors saw no low-level disruption or more serious incidents of poor behaviour during this inspection. Around the school, pupils generally behave well. Where routines have been clearly established – for example when entering and leaving assemblies – pupils respond very well. However, when there is less direct supervision from staff, pupils are sometimes boisterous. Pupils are respectful towards adults and get on well

together.

Leaders have made changes to the school uniform. They are firm in applying their expectations about uniform. However, pupils, in general, accept these expectations in a positive way. Pupils look very smart. In addition, pupils know that they are required to have a pencil case, planner and school bag, and that these will be checked when they arrive at school. This process does not significantly delay pupils' entry to the school building on their arrival and ensures that they are ready for lessons.

Pupils' attendance remains below the national average. However, there are clear systems in place to encourage pupils to attend properly. For example, classes' strong attendance is routinely reported in assemblies. Pupils' punctuality to school has improved significantly from the start of this school year. The new system for checking pupils' arrival encourages them to be on time. In addition, leaders have installed a large clock high on the school buildings so that pupils can easily check whether they are late and be encouraged not to dawdle.

Pupils are taught about important issues such as respect for others and how to keep themselves safe as part of the personal development curriculum. This is taught by form teachers for the first part of each day. Pupils concentrate well and make gains in their understanding as a result of this programme.

Leaders have introduced additional provision for pupils whose poor behaviour has meant that they have to work away from their class for a short period and for others for whom normal lessons are not appropriate for a longer period. The behavioural and learning expectations for both of these groups of pupils are as high as those for other pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

The results achieved by Year 11 pupils in 2018 have not been fully published. However, early information shows that these results were, once again, very poor. In contrast, current pupils are benefiting from the improvements in place, including higher expectations, better organisation and more effective teaching. Inspectors saw pupils making gains in their learning.

Test results are not yet available for pupils across the school so far this school year. However, Year 11 pupils have completed a first set of mock examinations. Their results indicate that they achieved roughly similar results to those at the same stage last year. However, leaders have much greater confidence that the school's assessment of pupils is now far more accurate. Pupils' achievement is compared to that in other TDT schools. This allows leaders to set a consistent standard in assessments. In addition to normal lessons, there is a wide-ranging programme of additional teaching to help Year 11 pupils to fill any gaps in their learning. The Year 11 pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they welcome these opportunities and

feel that they are helping them catch up on any gaps.

While the new pupil premium strategy is recent, the school's careful monitoring indicates that the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others has started to close.

External support

The school continues to receive significant support for leadership and teaching from TDT. This is part of the planned arrangements for the smooth transition of the school from CFAT to TDT. This support is highly effective.

CFAT's statement of action following the previous section 5 inspection was found not to be fit for purpose at the first monitoring inspection. That planning document has been superseded by the discussions between CFAT and the regional schools commissioner – in partnership with TDT – about the change of academy trust with responsibility for the school. The current plans are fit for purpose.