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Mrs Jo Cross
Head of School
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Dear Mrs Cross

Special measures monitoring inspection of Carleton High School

Following my visit with Mary Lanovy-Taylor, Ofsted Inspector 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2017. 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.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of Pontefract Academies Trust (PAT), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2017.

- Improve the accuracy of leaders' judgements about the school's work by:
 - ensuring that the school's plans set out precise and timely measures of the impact that school development actions are expected to have
 - making sure that senior leaders check the accuracy and consistency of the information they gather on pupils' attainment and progress
 - ensuring that middle leaders have sufficient opportunities to monitor the work of their teams and to intervene promptly to improve the consistency and impact of teaching.
- Improve governance at the school by ensuring that:
 - governors have a realistic view of how well the school is doing, based on accurate information
 - governors promptly develop their skills and understanding so that they are better able to hold leaders to account for their work
 - the findings of the review of governance recommended by the lead inspector are acted upon promptly and the impact of any recommended actions is measured carefully.
- Rapidly improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils so that it is similar to that of pupils nationally by:
 - rigorously monitoring the attendance of these pupils and acting promptly to reduce absence
 - further reducing fixed-term exclusions so that these pupils spend as much time as possible in school
 - ensuring that the implementation of the school's planned initiative to reduce absence through the work of a recently appointed, additional designated member of staff is very carefully and rigorously monitored by senior leaders and governors and that its impact is regularly reviewed.
- Significantly reduce variations in the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - all staff have high expectations of all pupils, but especially those who are disadvantaged, so that they make rapid and sustained progress that is similar to, or exceeds, that of pupils nationally
 - all staff use the school's detailed information about individual pupils consistently to refine planning and focus their teaching so that disadvantaged pupils in particular make the progress that they should
 - all staff follow the agreed school policy of giving pupils regular indications of

what they need to do to improve their learning, which are subsequently acted on

- staff develop their expertise by having more opportunities to share the good practice that exists in the school.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 20 to 21 November 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a wide range of documents. Inspectors met with the head of school, senior leaders, the chief executive of PAT and the executive director of secondary education. Inspectors met with two members of the governing body, subject leaders and teachers. Inspectors spoke with a wide range of pupils, both formally and informally, and observed teaching across a wide range of subjects. Some of the visits to classrooms were carried out with members of the senior leadership team and subject leaders. Inspectors also conducted a series of tours of the school to see learning in progress.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing. The headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the subject leader for humanities have left. Teachers in dance, humanities, geography and modern foreign languages have also left. They have been replaced by a head of school, a new senior leader in charge of curriculum and assessment, an assistant headteacher and a subject leader in geography. There are new teachers in mathematics, science, history, geography and physical education.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Despite the significant turnover of staff, leaders have successfully remained focused on keeping the school's improvement journey on track. The most significant improvements have been in pupils' behaviour and teacher accountability for the progress pupils make.

Leaders have an accurate view of what is working well and what needs to quickly improve. As a result, the school has been a hive of purposeful activity since the previous monitoring inspection. The newly introduced 'achievement and improvement' cycle makes it crystal clear to all teachers that improving teaching, learning and pupils' progress are the top priorities. Leaders now provide greater support and challenge for all teachers to make sure that they have an accurate and honest view of how well pupils are achieving. This thread of accountability runs through all levels of leadership.

Most teachers and leaders are rising to the challenge. For some, it has been a steep learning curve. However, a growing number of subject leaders are responding well. They are now sharply focusing on improving teaching and learning.

Leaders have also developed the quality of their improvement plans. These plans are succinct and user-friendly. A governing body has replaced the interim executive

school governance committee. This group of governors is benefiting from the more accessible documentation, especially in relation to pupils' achievement. This is helping them to see the 'wood for the trees'. Consequently, governors are – despite the quality of minutes from some of their meetings – increasingly effective in challenging leaders. Governors have been proactive in planning upcoming training to help them feel more confident in understanding the new data systems.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching continues to improve. Weekly training is beginning to have a positive impact. There are now consistent starts and ends to lessons, in line with whole-school expectations. Teachers convey that time is precious and there is no time to waste. The levels of challenge are improving. However, there are times when some teaching strategies are less successful, such as 'quick six' questioning, which – at times – is anything but quick.

Pupils have noticed that the quality of explanation and questioning is improving. This is helping them improve their understanding of topics and think more deeply about what they are studying. However, there are times when teachers do not use questioning well enough to probe just how well pupils have understood something new.

Teacher expectations are rising too. Leaders have improved the targets set for pupils. This is helping teachers 'up their game' and understand that their pupils are capable of far more than they may have realised. Teachers, particularly in mathematics, are digging deep into the answers that pupils provide. As a result, teachers are uncovering weaknesses and quickly adapting their teaching to tackle these issues.

Teacher expectations for lower attainers have improved in some classrooms. However, in other classrooms, some teachers are accepting of work that could – and should – be of a higher quality. For some teachers, their comments aimed at improving presentation are falling on deaf ears. Some pupils continue to make the same mistakes time and again. Teacher expectations for pupils who are in isolation – often for poor behaviour – are not high enough. There are too many instances of pupils having little – if any – meaningful work to do. This does little to keep them in touch with topics they are studying.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there have been significant improvements in the whole-school behaviour policy. This has led to an improved learning environment in which teachers can get on with teaching. Pupils report that instances of talking when the teacher is talking are much lower and behavioural issues are now dealt with consistently across the school.

Newly introduced non-teaching student liaison officers (SLOs) have also helped teachers to focus on improving teaching. SLOs effectively follow up on poor behaviour. Teachers, cleaners, kitchen staff and pupils all report that there have been improvements to behaviour in and out of lessons. The use of staggered lunchtimes means that pupils have more time to have their lunch. Dedicated lunchtimes for Year 7 pupils are helping them to settle into new school routines.

Attendance is highest in Years 7 and 8. There have been improvements to the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Improving the attendance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities remains a key priority. With the introduction of the 'consequence' behaviour rules, there had been a spike in fixed-term exclusions. However, these are starting to reduce as pupils become familiar with following the new behaviour rules and expectations.

Leaders have started to improve the use of form time. There are now more opportunities for pupils to discuss the impact that good attendance can have on their enjoyment and achievement in school. Those pupils who had low attendance are coming to realise the relevance school can have on their lives. Many of these pupils have made significant improvements in their attendance, often from very low levels. Older pupils are coming to understand the importance of reading and the benefits this can have on future academic success.

Leaders recognise that – despite the use of anti-bullying week and other drop-down curriculum events – they need to do more to teach pupils about a wider range of personal, social and health education issues.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes for Year 11 pupils in 2018 were very disappointing. By the end of Year 11, progress for pupils has remained below average for the last two years. This is, in part, due to a legacy of weaker teaching. It is also due to an overinflated view of how well pupils may have achieved previously.

Leaders are tackling these issues through the quality assurance measures they have introduced, including the 'achievement and improvement' cycle. However, due to the recent introduction of this approach, the current evidence of impact is patchy. It is too soon to evaluate the impact this is having on pupils across all year groups.

Leaders have introduced after-school 'achieve sessions' for all Year 11 pupils. These are starting to have a positive effect. Pupils report that this is helping them remember key information from lessons. It is building their confidence to successfully tackle examination questions.

Teachers' use of assessment information is also improving. The new assessment systems prevent teachers from exaggerating how well pupils are achieving. They focus on what is realistic, but challenging. This assessment information is much

easier for teachers, governors and trust leaders to understand. Pupils' progress issues are easier to spot and this is helping to sharpen the timeliness and effectiveness of interventions.

External support

New trust leaders have achieved much in a short period of time. They have made sensible strategic decisions to align Carleton and The King's School curriculums so that pupils from both schools are studying the same curriculum at the same time. They have also aligned assessments so that staff can compare how well pupils are doing across the two schools. This is helping to improve the quality and impact of collaboration and the sharing of good practice. It is having a positive impact on teachers' workload as they are starting to share ideas and plans.

Leaders have also taken effective steps to rebrand the school. Along with a change in the school name, classrooms have been repainted, new carpets have been laid and – throughout the school – there are inspirational and motivating posters encouraging pupils to achieve. These actions are helping staff and pupils feel appreciated and that they are worth investing in.

The chief executive – along with other trust leaders – is highly visible in and around the school. This helps reinforce key trust-wide strategic messages. These include being honest about how things really are so that improvements are both effective and sustainable. These are having a positive impact on the progress the school is making.