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4 February 2019

Mrs Julie Burnside  
Acting Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Burnside

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Hendon Brook School**

Following my visit to your school on 22–23 January 2019, 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 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 2017.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

The school's action plans are not 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 chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2017.**

- Improve leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
  - establishing a culture of high ambition for all pupils which is communicated to and shared by everyone: staff, pupils and parents
  - ensuring that school leaders have a well-informed strategic plan that provides clear direction for the school and will move it forward
  - ensuring that self-evaluation is based on an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses
  - ensuring that they have up-to-date, reliable information about key aspects of the school's performance, including pupils' academic achievement, behaviour and attendance
  - reviewing the school's performance regularly and using the outcomes of these reviews to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategic plan and hold senior leaders to account
  - taking urgent and decisive action to stabilise staffing, ensuring that finances are used well to put in place a staffing structure which distributes responsibilities appropriately
  - providing middle leaders with the time, resources and support to ensure that they contribute to the raising of standards in their subjects across the school
  - making sure that classroom monitoring focuses on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning
  - ensuring that there is a suitable policy and procedures in place so that pupils' attendance improves rapidly
  - making sure that the school's website meets statutory requirements and provides parents with frequent, useful information about the school and what their children are doing
  - providing relevant training and support for governors and senior leaders to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively
  - checking regularly on the progress that all the different groups of pupils make and taking swift action if any group are not achieving as well as they should
  - making sure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as that intended to improve primary physical education and sport provision, is well used so it improves outcomes for pupils.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that all groups of pupils, especially the disadvantaged and the most able, make much better progress than

at present by ensuring that all teachers:

- have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
- assess pupils' work and learning accurately and set them work which is well matched to their abilities
- plan learning which engages and challenges pupils, particularly the most able
- plan work which pupils find interesting and purposeful so that they develop positive attitudes to learning, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics
- make sure that pupils make better progress in reading, comprehension and writing composition as a result of a frequent and specific focus on the development and assessment of these skills
- provide opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve problems, think for themselves and develop fluency in the fundamentals of mathematics
- make sure that pupils know how to improve their work and are given timely opportunities to respond to teachers' advice and correct mistakes
- meet the requirements set out in the teachers' standards
- have a secure understanding of the age group they are working with and the relevant subject knowledge
- closely scrutinise the impact of the interventions employed to help pupils catch up to ensure that they are making a positive difference, particularly to pupils with low starting points
- plan a cohesive curriculum, which meets the needs of pupils and enables teachers to build on pupils' prior learning across the full range of subjects
- plan lessons effectively so that lesson time is well used to optimise pupils' learning
- ensure that activities are planned to develop pupils' positive attitudes to learning and develop essential behaviours for learning, including resilience, independence and perseverance.

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 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 22 to 23 January 2019**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, middle leaders, members of staff, and two teachers from the neighbouring nursery school. HMI had a discussion with three members of the management committee and talked to the chair of the management committee on the telephone. She also met with two representatives of the local authority. She met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust that it is proposed the school will join. HMI met with five pupils to discuss the changes that have happened in the school since the previous inspection. She also met with five parents and carers and took account of two letters sent in by parents. HMI conducted a learning walk with the acting headteacher to see activities and behaviour around school at various times of the day. HMI scrutinised a range of documents including those related to governance, attendance, the curriculum and assessment. She also looked at pupils' work. The local authority's statement of action and school's plan for improvement were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there has been a great deal of change and upheaval for the school. Staff have come and gone, including school leaders. The intended conversion to academy status has been delayed and may not now take place. An acting headteacher, offered by the multi-academy trust, has led the school from October 2018. This arrangement is due to end at this February half term. Another acting headteacher, sourced by the local authority, is expected to be seconded into the post from February until the end of the summer term. Two of the four teachers in post are temporary.

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

The local authority's statement of action was judged fit for purpose shortly after the inspection in April 2017. The plan makes clear the actions the local authority will take over the two years towards the removal of special measures. Achievement targets are appropriately ambitious and indicate the school's commitment to being a good school at the end of the period of improvement. There is a clear outline of the training that staff will receive to improve their practice. The timescales for these developments are planned and spaced appropriately to allow staff to embed what they learn. No time has been wasted in implementing the actions outlined in the statement. Nonetheless, despite appropriate planning, the impact of the local authority's actions has been diluted significantly by the continual changes in staffing and the uncertainty about the school's future.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose. It is hard to see the connection between the areas of improvement asked of the school by the previous Ofsted report and the actions identified in the school improvement plan. Where there is reference made to them, they lack focus and are not sufficiently pithy.

There has been a great deal of slippage in the implementation of the school improvement plan, with little evidence that there has been much attention paid to catching up or making sure that an area for improvement has been fully addressed before moving on to something new. It is difficult to see that many of the areas for improvement have been addressed sufficiently. Developments have not been embedded so are not sustainable into the future.

The school is no further forward in its school improvement journey after 18 months than would be expected within the first term of being placed in a category. This is a key reason for the decision that the school has not made sufficient progress.

However, the most recent school improvement plan, devised by the local authority school improvement team and implemented by the present acting headteacher, has had a very positive impact. The acting headteacher has completed much of the plan to great effect. She has also gone beyond what has been asked of her. She has made inroads into developing subjects other than English and mathematics, behaviour, attitudes to learning and staff morale. She has also established sustainable training for staff that is beginning to be embedded as good-quality teaching and learning practice.

The acting headteacher has had an extensive, positive influence on the school. Morale is being restored and a sense of learning and excitement for improvement is being created. She has set the foundations from which improvements in the quality of teaching, behaviour, attitudes to learning and outcomes can now be built. In spite of this, uncertainty about the future of the school, which currently rests with the local authority, is hanging over the school and is stalling its progress.

Members of the school's management committee are well intentioned and care about the school and pupils. However, they have not ensured that the actions required following the last Ofsted inspection have been implemented. The management committee is ineffective and has contributed to the lack of progress in the school over 18 months. Its members have not had a systematic and rigorous approach to ensuring that the school's action plans were fit for purpose and implemented swiftly. They admit themselves that they had lost focus. Concentration on finance and staffing issues, combined with a highly inflated view of the school's effectiveness at the time of the last inspection, has been to the detriment of the school.

Many of the management committee do not have the skills and expertise to drive school improvement forward. Only superficial attention has been paid to the external review of governance. For example, the limited number of training courses

that members have attended has not equipped them to rigorously tackle the improvement issues in the school. It is unclear why this situation was allowed to continue and why a more expert body of governance was not considered.

HMI appreciates that staffing, finance and the proposed academy were a diversion, but the management committee has a key responsibility to ensure that pupils are getting the best deal possible. This has not been the case.

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

Staff were obviously disappointed with the outcome of the previous inspection and morale had suffered. Pleasingly, with the acting headteacher at the helm, this has been restored and there is a renewed optimism and enthusiasm. Staff have been quick and keen to respond to the clear direction that they have now been given. They are eager to take on board the developments in teaching, learning and assessment and contribute to the school's improvement journey.

A range of training has been put in place, particularly around reading, mathematics and raising expectations of presentation and feedback. There has also been a focus on effectively using assessment information to plan activities that more closely meet pupils' learning needs. It was evident during the monitoring visit that staff are embracing the changes and working hard to put them into practice in their classrooms.

Additionally, pupils are being offered a wider and more meaningful curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils are keen to say that they now find learning fun. They feel that teachers have made the curriculum interesting and enjoyable. 'Learning here has perked me up,' was a typical sentiment from pupils.

The most noticeable improvement in school, and remarked on by staff and pupils alike, is the improved attitude to learning. Pupils know that they are expected to work. They also know that they will be listened to and offered help if they need it.

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

Behaviour in school has improved significantly. Pupils and staff commented to HMI that before the present acting headteacher arrived, pupils wandered the corridors, refused to work and spent a great deal of time out of class. This behaviour is now rare. Pupils talk increasingly confidently about keeping themselves calm and 'not digging themselves into a hole'. As a result, Hendon Brook is now a positive and calm place to be. The foundations have been laid for future school improvement success.

Systems have been put in place to raise expectations of pupils' attendance. Absence is closely monitored and followed up quickly. Those who struggle with their attendance are given individual support and encouragement. This is having a

positive effect on absence figures, which are creeping closer to national averages.

Pupils say that they feel happy in school. Parents confirm this, saying that their children are 'so different from what they used to be'; 'they are excited to go to school and equally excited to come home and say what they have been doing in class that day'.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

A new assessment system has been introduced. It is simple and clear to understand. Firm baselines have been established: teachers are using this assessment information to identify pupils' needs effectively and plan for their learning. At the time of the monitoring visit, the school had just completed its first data collection since the baseline was set in November 2018. The preliminary information indicates that pupils are beginning to make progress, particularly in reading and, to a slightly lesser extent, mathematics. However, leaders are clear that it is still early days and expect that pupils' progress will accelerate in future months as improved teaching and learning practice is embedded.

Evidence in pupils' books confirms that staff have a much better understanding of the gaps in pupils' learning and their needs. Teachers now know exactly where a pupil is in their reading, writing and mathematics. They also have a good understanding of individual pupils' behavioural, social and emotional needs.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics are enthusiastic and eager to develop their subjects. They have a precise knowledge of how close every pupil in school is to what would typically be expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Many pupils are currently below what is expected for their age, particularly the older key stage 2 pupils. Some are up to two years behind their peers. However, there are now no excuses made for pupils. The school's main focus is on getting pupils as close to where they should be in their learning as possible. This will enable them, if appropriate, to return successfully to a mainstream school.

### **External support**

External support from the local authority school improvement team has been appropriate in terms of teaching and learning, although issues with the school improvement plan and the governance of the school should have been picked up and acted on with greater effect.

The local authority has found a new acting headteacher for next term. It also found an experienced and able chair for the management committee. However, the hiatus in deciding the school's future, and the part it will play in the local authority's inclusion strategy, has significantly contributed to the delays in getting this school back on its feet.



Pendle Education Trust has been very supportive to Hendon Brook. It has provided an experienced and effective acting headteacher and good-quality teaching, learning and assessment support. This has been greatly appreciated by staff.

An external review of governance was completed and recommendations were appropriate. However, the management committee has not implemented these rigorously enough. Remaining weaknesses in governance have hampered the improvement of the school.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding was also completed, and recommendations were used by a previous leadership team to create an action plan. However, these actions were not fully implemented. The present acting headteacher has reviewed the action plan and has now implemented it fully.