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24 October 2019

Mrs Julie-Ann Swaysland
Ivingswood Academy
Greenway
Chesham
Buckinghamshire
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Dear Mrs Swaysland

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ivingswood Academy

Following my visit with Tracey Bowen, Ofsted inspector, to your school on 1–2 October 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in September 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Shazia Akram
Her Majesty’s Inspector

Annex

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

- Prioritise the work to address weaknesses in safeguarding procedures and strongly promote pupils' welfare, including in the early years, by ensuring that:
 - all safeguarding procedures follow the current guidance issued by the Secretary of State and meet statutory requirements
 - staff's understanding of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe is updated regularly
 - risk assessments are completed appropriately, kept up to date and implemented effectively.
- Improve the quality of leadership and governance, including in the early years, by ensuring that:
 - all systems for monitoring the work of the school are robust and leaders and managers are held to account for the progress of all groups of pupils
 - the progress of all groups of pupils is assessed accurately by school leaders
 - middle leaders' skills are developed effectively to enable them to have a greater impact on improvements in teaching, learning and assessment
 - the school's curriculum is thoroughly reviewed to engage and excite pupils in a wide range of learning across all subjects
 - all policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and thoroughly checked
 - the school's website meets statutory requirements
 - governors take a full and effective role in challenging leaders to bring about rapid improvement.
- Actively promote the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
 - keeping consistent and accurate logs of all behaviour and bullying incidents
 - analysing patterns of behaviour in order to enable effective action to be taken to improve it
 - urgently tackle pupils' absence and lateness, particularly for those who are persistently late or absent.
- Enhance provision and the quality of learning for children in the early years by:
 - providing a range of experiences that challenge and extend children's learning
 - making sure all adults actively promote children's language development.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently effective in order to raise standards and enable all groups of pupils to make at least good progress by:

- raising expectations of what pupils can do and the progress they can make
- providing effective support for all groups of pupils to enable them to make at least good progress from their starting points.
- challenging the most able pupils to enable them to make rapid progress, gain a deeper level of understanding and reach high standards
- making sure teachers' assessments of pupils' learning are accurate
- using assessment information to adjust plans and learning in lessons to provide sufficient challenge to all groups of pupils.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 1 October 2019 to 2 October 2019

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the local governing body and the executive headteacher of the Red Kite Schools Trust. An inspector met with the school improvement officer employed by the trust to work with the school. Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils and spoke to pupils informally when observing the school's work. Inspectors listened to a group of pupils read. Inspectors conducted joint lesson visits with the headteacher and assistant headteacher and looked at work in pupils' books. An inspector evaluated the school's action plan.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing at the school since the last monitoring visit. There have been no changes to the status of the school since the last monitoring visit.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders have not acted with sufficient urgency to reverse the steep decline in standards in early years, phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and key stage 2. Staff are not clear about the school's priorities, and there is a lack of focus and direction to the school's planned improvements. While leaders have worked hard to improve pupils' learning in English and mathematics, these improvements are not yet consistent across the school. Additionally, leaders have not made necessary improvements in other areas of the curriculum. As a result, key areas remain weak and the school's journey towards removal of special measures has slowed. Leaders and governors acknowledge that improving the quality of education is of the highest priority.

Teachers do not always make clear to pupils what they are expected to learn in subjects other than English and mathematics. The wider curriculum is not well planned and sequenced to make sure that pupils are able to learn well in all subjects. Teachers do not have the training and support to help them plan well. Teachers do not make sure pupils learn subject-specific knowledge in the right order across different year groups. The quality of planning and teaching across the wider curriculum remains too weak. While pupils have opportunities to partake in exciting trips, workshops and visits, such extra-curricular opportunities do not secure pupils' understanding and knowledge of subjects studied in the curriculum.

The rate of improvement in the quality of education in the early years has not been fast enough. Weaknesses identified in previous monitoring visits have not been

addressed. Leaders have not made necessary improvements to the curriculum. Staff are unclear about the important things that children need to learn. Children do not learn phonics quickly enough because leaders have not made sure that the phonics programme is taught systematically. Staff are unsure of when children should know different sounds and words. Staff do not help children develop communication skills. Children's early mathematics knowledge is too weak.

Leaders are in the process of finalising the pupil premium spending plan. The current plan lacks rigour and is not focused precisely enough so leaders and governors can evaluate the success of actions. Leaders and governors have not monitored the performance of disadvantaged pupils carefully enough. As a result, there is a lack of focus on raising standards for disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils continue to underachieve across the curriculum.

Leaders have secured improvements in the school's safeguarding arrangements. Mandatory checks, vetting and training are meticulous. As a result, staff are well trained and knowledgeable about keeping pupils safe. They fully understand and use the school's referral processes to ensure pupils' safety when needed. Leaders work effectively with other professional agencies and are tenacious in holding them to account where required. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and trust adults.

Leaders and staff have worked hard to ensure that pupils feel safe and happy. Pupils behave well, both in the classroom and around the school. Pupils told inspectors that staff help them deal with their worries and help them find ways to take care of their mental health and well-being. Relationships are based on mutual respect and pupils show a kind, considerate attitude towards staff and others. Pupils say that bullying does not happen at the school. They told inspectors this is because leaders and staff deal with incidents straight away. There are warm respectful relationships between pupils and adults. Leaders have worked hard to improve attendance and punctuality. Leaders monitor attendance meticulously and notify the local authority to issue penalty fines in cases when pupils miss school for long periods of time.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Although school leaders, trust leaders and governors worked hard to address the previous inspection findings, they recognise that their efforts have not been effective enough towards securing necessary, rapid improvements.

Leaders have not built on early improvements and made sure these are established strongly. Leaders recognise that some strategic actions lack precision and rigour. Therefore, the quality of education continues to remain weak overall. The trust's statement of action has not been adapted to make sure that the plan remains purposeful.

Leaders have not made sure that the wider curriculum is organised and planned well. This means that teaching does not help all pupils develop knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects. Leaders recognise that they need to ensure that teachers have the right training and support to help them plan what pupils learn across the wider curriculum. Subject leadership across the wider curriculum has not been developed.

Local governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They have a clear understanding of the areas which have not been addressed well. They recognise they have not challenged leaders and held them to account well enough about the quality of education. Local governors do not have an incisive oversight of the difference the additional pupil premium funding is making. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance and achievement in early years, phonics and at the end of key stage 2 have not improved.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding was carried out after the last inspection. It identified what was working well and what needed to be improved. However, the recommendations from the review have yet to be translated into plans.

Leaders, trustees and governors share a vision to create an inclusive school which is at the heart of the community. Leaders have successfully fostered positive relationships with all stakeholders.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders, governors and staff share a vision for the success of the school.
- Leaders have successfully developed a school-wide approach to improve pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The early signs of improvement have not been built upon to make sure that the quality of education is of a high enough standard.
- Leaders' plans to address areas of weakness are not sharply focused. This includes the monitoring of the pupil premium plan.
- The areas of weakness in early years have not been addressed.
- The wider curriculum is not well sequenced. Teachers do not have the training and support to help them teach well.

External support

The trust commissioned additional consultancy to review the school's work and provide further support and challenge for leaders. Buckinghamshire local authority's

school improvement service provides support for early years. Two teachers have engaged in a curriculum-focused project with the Department of Education.