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8 November 2019

Mr Richard Harrison  
Acting Headteacher  
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NE15 9TP

Dear Mr Harrison

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Walbottle Campus**

Following my visit with Moira Banks, Ofsted Inspector and Toni Spoons, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 22 to 23 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 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 February 2019.

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 improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection other than in English and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Newcastle upon Tyne. This

letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2019

#### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the standard of behaviour and conduct of a significant minority of pupils in key stages 3 and 4 by:
  - training teachers to apply the school’s behaviour policy consistently and with authority, including ensuring that derogatory language is firmly challenged
  - making sure that staff and pupils understand the types of behaviour that are and are not acceptable
  - developing the skills of teachers and leaders to de-escalate poor behaviour and to nurture more positive attitudes to education
  - further developing the role and effectiveness of The Zone, the school’s internal alternative education provision
  - ensuring that part-time timetables used to reintegrate previously excluded pupils have a stated end point
  - rapidly reducing the use of exclusion to be more closely in line with levels seen nationally.
- Improve the overall level of attendance and rapidly reduce the level of persistent absence by:
  - working more effectively with parents and carers so that they better understand the importance of excellent attendance and the negative effect of poor attendance on their children’s education
  - focusing more explicitly on the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make consistently good progress across different subjects by:
  - raising expectations and ensuring that teachers provide challenging topics that reinforce and build on what pupils, and students in the sixth form, already know and can do
  - ensuring that teachers plan and use more probing questions to check on and deepen pupils’ understanding
  - ensuring that all teachers address errors in pupils’ spelling, punctuation and grammar so that they improve their writing skills
  - ensuring that guidance in the support plans of pupils with SEND are used by teachers to improve their access to the curriculum and to accelerate their progress
  - providing training for teachers on the day-to-day strategies they can use to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - monitoring more closely the effect of actions taken to improve the school by checking more on the difference that actions are making in the classroom
  - strengthening the skills of middle leaders so that they become more influential in raising the expectations of their colleagues
  - improving the quality of support received by pupils with SEND
  - ensuring that governors and leaders monitor closely and refine current strategies to improve attendance, accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils and improve pupils' reading skills
  - ensuring that all members of staff help to foster pupils' character and promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that all pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 22 October 2019 to 23 October 2019**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work. They analysed documents and met with the acting headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. They also met with curriculum leaders, pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff, members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with the chief executive officer of Northern Education Trust. Inspectors also looked at safeguarding records and made visits to lessons alongside senior leaders.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes. The school is subject to an academy order and this is in the process of being brokered with Northern Education Trust. The previous headteacher has recently retired and a deputy headteacher is now acting headteacher. Since the previous inspection, 26 members of staff, including 14 teachers, have left the school. Thirty new staff have joined the school, including 19 teachers. The local authority has brokered different packages for school support, including a service level agreement with Northern Education Trust for a support package for the school which is due to begin in November 2019.

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

Leaders' actions since the previous inspection have not improved the quality of education in the school. Outcomes for the Year 11 pupils who left the school in the summer of 2019 were weak. Provisional progress information shows that pupils underachieved.

More recently, leaders have recognised the need to go 'back to basics' with expectations for pupils in lessons. A format for the structure of lessons is now in place and staff are beginning to use it. For example, more teachers are ensuring that pupils are quiet when teachers are addressing the class. It is too soon to see whether this more structured start to lessons is enabling pupils to know more and remember more.

Teachers use a variety of questions to check pupils' understanding and learning. However, too often, pupils are unable to answer questions about their learning. This is because pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders say that they are working hard to ensure that pupils in the current Year 11 have a better chance of success. They say that the support from Northern Education Trust after October half term will help them to ensure that Year 11 pupils can achieve well in their GCSE

examinations this year.

The employment of a primary school teacher is helping pupils in Years 7 and 8 to learn more. There are better opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and mathematics. Through this work, staff are also becoming more aware of how much pupils should know and be able to do when they join the school from primary school. This is beginning to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. It is too soon to see the impact of this work, which began in September 2019.

There is a new inclusion lead at the school. They are working with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), who is also new to post. They have improved the information that is available to teachers about pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have also assigned 'key workers' to pupils to help them with their learning and emotional and social well-being. Teachers are more aware of the SEND documentation that is available. It is too soon to see whether this is enabling teachers to be more effective in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND.

Following the previous inspection, curriculum leaders began a review of the curriculum. An example of this is the development of a new subject, 'the world around us'. This subject combines personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) with religious education (RE). Pupils are beginning to learn more about life in modern Britain and about different religions, cultures and backgrounds.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that teachers did not apply the behaviour policy effectively. Recently, leaders have made some changes to the policy. This includes the use of a 'hot desk' room to support pupils who are removed from mainstream lessons because of their behaviour. Teachers say that this is a positive step. Pupils say, and school records show, that behaviour remains an issue. Pupils' learning is still too frequently disrupted by other pupils' poor behaviour. Pupils also say that not all teachers deal with misbehaviour consistently well. This is because some teachers put up with more than others.

During this inspection, inspectors heard little derogatory language. Pupils say that if teachers hear bad language, they address it immediately. Pupils say that they do hear derogatory language and swearing frequently. This includes on the school buses. There is much work to do to change the school culture so that pupils self-regulate their language.

Leaders use exclusions when pupils fight, smoke in school or continually disrupt lessons. There is a reintegration meeting following an exclusion, which pupils and parents must attend. The number of fixed-term exclusions is lower so far this academic year. This is a positive step, but exclusions still remain too high.

Teachers and staff do not always take a proactive approach to behaviour management. For example, when pupils begin 'play-fighting' or tugging each other's

clothes, teachers do not always stop them from doing so. This can then escalate and result in pupils fighting more seriously. This sometimes occurs in social time. In lessons, most pupils are compliant and follow teachers' instructions. However, some pupils are rude to teachers and argue with them when asked to comply. Lunchtime staff and pupils say that there is pushing and shoving and that teachers are not consistent in addressing these issues.

Some pupils spend time in 'the zone'. This is an area where pupils attend when they have been placed on a part-time timetable. Improvements have been made to this area of the school, for example there is now a structure in place for pupils to complete work in English, mathematics and science. Pupils are also expected to spend some time reading. Although this is an improvement, pupils are not accessing work from the wider curriculum, which means they do not keep up with all of their subjects. Pupils who are on part-time timetables now have clear dates for reintegration back into mainstream classes. Most pupils spoken with in 'the zone' valued the time they had spent there and felt they would be more successful when back in mainstream classes. Most pupils' attendance improves while they are in 'the zone'. This is in part due to positive relationships that staff are building with parents.

Pupils' attendance overall is not improving rapidly enough. Attendance remains a significant concern. This is particularly the case for pupils who are disadvantaged and for those with SEND. Persistent absence is well above the national average. It is higher this year than for the same period in the last academic year. Leaders have tried different strategies, and some have worked but then the strategies have been changed. Pupils need to recognise that they have a responsibility to attend school regularly and make every effort to do so.

Leaders have begun to take more action recently to improve the school. These actions are based on advice and guidance from external support. Actions are also leaders' own ideas of what needs to improve. These are in the school development and post-Ofsted action plan. The action plan contains appropriate ideas and strategies for school improvement. While these actions are valid, it is not possible to see how they are improving the school. This is because it is too soon following implementation. The plan also does not set out specifically enough when leaders will evaluate the effectiveness of their actions.

Curriculum leaders have visions for their subject areas. They have worked with primary schools to make changes to the key stage 3 curriculum. This to ensure that work builds on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. The impact of this more challenging curriculum is not yet clear. Curriculum leaders accept that there is a lot of work to do with pupils in key stage 4 who will not benefit from this improved curriculum. They also accept that there is a lot to do to ensure a consistent approach from all staff in their subject areas.

The sixth-form leader is knowledgeable and passionate. She is dedicated to ensuring that students in the sixth form are successful. She is implementing

systems to ensure that if students fall behind, there is rapid support to ensure that they are quickly brought back on track. Students are improving their attendance in the sixth form. Work remains to ensure that students have a secure grounding in key stage 4. This will allow them to make more effective progress when they enter the sixth form. There is some work to do to ensure that students select the right courses and transition from Year 12 to 13 successfully.

Governors have a clear understanding of the position the school is in. They are aware that actions to improve the school need to happen more swiftly. Governors know that there is insufficient capacity in the school to do this currently. They are very happy with the brokered service level agreement with Northern Education Trust. Governors say that the current leaders are doing what they can to 'steady the ship'. They expect that rapid improvement will take place when the school becomes an academy.

### **External support**

Since the previous inspection, there has been a large amount of additional support put in place. This includes various support brokered through the local authority and brokered by the previous headteacher. The impact of this support is seen in the development plan. This has been improved by the acting headteacher alongside his headteacher mentor. It is too soon to see the full impact of the most recent external support.