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21 November 2019

Miss C Wright  
Harrop Fold School  
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Dear Miss Wright

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Harrop Fold School**

Following my visit with Niall Gallagher, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 November 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 2018.

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.

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

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Salford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2018**

- Ensure that leaders continue to improve the systems for safeguarding pupils by:
  - completing the review and rewriting of policies linked to safeguarding
  - further refining the information collected about pupils' safety, welfare and behaviour so that it is easier to identify patterns
  - further improving the security of the school site.
- Ensure that senior leaders can effectively lead the wide-ranging improvements urgently needed by:
  - building stability and confidence across the whole school community
  - securing and deploying sufficient senior leadership time overall and, in particular, to allow them to attend to the most urgent priorities
  - further building staff morale.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the learning needs of all pupils.
- Ensure that pupils' behaviour improves and that all staff:
  - continue to implement the new behaviour policy with increasing consistency
  - demand that pupils attend lessons as expected
  - set the highest expectations for the culture of the school so that pupils accept that poor behaviour, including bullying and any other aggressive or disrespectful behaviour, is unacceptable.
- Ensure that pupils' attendance improves by:
  - using the increased monitoring of attendance to further identify and act on any groups with high absence
  - addressing the lower attendance at afternoon school
  - continuing to challenge pupils' families when they are condoning poor attendance.
- Ensure that systematic training for staff increases their skills and confidence in response to needs identified by the school, including – at an early stage – training for:
  - middle leaders on assessment and the efficient use of data
  - teachers on the best ways to support pupils' learning needs, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged
  - all staff on effective behaviour management, in and out of lessons.

- Ensure that pupils' outcomes across a range of subjects improve as a result of consistently effective teaching and learning, by ensuring that teachers:
  - plan work that sets high expectations of pupils, whatever their starting points, and encourages them to do their best in their effort and presentation
  - use accurate assessment as a central part of their teaching strategies
  - build pupils' understanding through effective questioning
  - support the development of pupils' speaking and writing skills, whenever possible and appropriate, as part of learning.
- Ensure that parents' confidence in and partnership with the school and its leaders improve by:
  - rapidly starting to resolve the issues of concern to parents
  - continuing to make clear the school's highest possible expectations of how parents can contribute to and participate in their children's education
  - improving how well communication systems work with parents.
- Ensure that governance actively supports school improvement by making sure that governors:
  - have a common understanding of the challenges that the school faces
  - have the knowledge and skills that they need, including about safeguarding and the use of data about the school's performance
  - provide strong but supportive challenge to senior leaders, including concerning the school's use of the pupil premium and other additional funding.

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 funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 6 to 7 November 2019**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal and other members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors met with other members of staff, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and those with responsibility for safeguarding. An inspector met with two members of the governing body, including the chair. Inspectors also met with leaders from the trust that is supporting the school and a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors visited lessons to evaluate pupils' behaviour and the quality of education. An inspector also visited the school's inclusion room. Inspectors spoke to pupils about their learning and reviewed their work in lessons. Pupils discussed their views of the school with inspectors at social times and during two formal meetings. Inspectors reviewed documents, including action plans, information about attendance and behaviour and external reviews.

### **Context**

Senior leaders from other schools provided much-needed leadership capacity at Harrop Fold following the previous inspection. A stable and permanent leadership team is now in post. Their appointment has addressed the turbulence caused by the earlier change of leaders. The principal, who was already working at the school, was appointed in July 2018.

The membership of the governing body has changed considerably over the last year. New members have an increased amount of expertise and experience in education and governance.

A number of teachers left the school at the end of the summer term. Leaders have successfully appointed staff to nearly all teaching posts.

A partnership with a multi-academy trust (MAT), who currently works with the school, was established in March 2019. School policies and systems are being aligned with those of the trust, including the curriculum. The local authority is supportive of this process.

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

There has been improvement in many areas of the school since the previous inspection. Improvement has been particularly evident since the appointment of the principal and the partnership with the MAT was established. Since the previous inspection, leaders have reviewed the school's curriculum. They

identified some serious weaknesses in key stage 3. These weaknesses have contributed to significant gaps in the knowledge and skills of some older pupils. Leaders have dealt with these weaknesses. Pupils in key stage 3 now experience a broad and balanced curriculum.

Teachers generally follow the school's expectations about the structure of lessons. Pupils are familiar with this structure and the routine it brings to their learning. Teachers regularly model their expectations for an activity to ensure that pupils understand what to do. This is useful but can lead to an overemphasis on what needs to be achieved by the end of a sequence of learning. Less focus is placed on the detail of the different steps needed to complete the whole task. As a result, sometimes assessment activities dominate how teachers plan and structure learning. Teachers question pupils to check their understanding during lessons. However, some staff do not effectively use the responses they get to adapt the lesson to aid pupils' learning.

Many teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this well in lessons, for example by using accurate subject-specific vocabulary. These teachers make sure pupils understand and use such terms. Some teachers do not use the best vocabulary or examples they can. This limits pupils' opportunities to develop their language. It also narrows the range of examples and situations that are relevant to the subjects that pupils study.

There are concerning gaps in pupils' knowledge, particularly for those in Year 11. These gaps are because of poor decisions that have previously been taken about the curriculum. This has a negative effect on pupils' current progress. Teachers are attempting to resolve this. For example, they now run extra sessions at the end of the school day for pupils in Year 11. However, staff face a huge challenge this year to rectify the deficiencies in pupils' knowledge and skills.

Pupils are hugely lacking in confidence about their abilities to learn. When pupils can demonstrate their success in lessons, they are praised by their teachers. Pupils benefit from a sense of achievement when their efforts are fruitful. This helps them to become more confident and enjoy learning. Teachers currently face additional challenges because pupils' confidence and resilience have not been successfully developed in the past.

Pupils' behaviour is improving. Leaders make their expectations about behaviour clear and have established appropriate routines. Staff and pupils understand these well. There is now an effective behaviour management team. Staff work hard to make sure pupils have every opportunity to meet the school's expectations about conduct and uniform. Some staff are particularly skilled at making sure pupils meet expectations. They handle situations sensitively and effectively, and diffuse confrontation. There are, though, some inconsistencies in how staff use the school's policies. Leaders have taken a step-by-step approach to raising expectations about behaviour. This is working. The number of pupils who are placed in isolation has

decreased significantly. Leaders acknowledge that when pupils are removed from lessons it is because the quality of education is not yet good enough. Leaders are set to address this matter. The number of pupils who are excluded from the school is reducing, albeit from a high level last year.

Improvements in pupils' conduct are most apparent in lessons where behaviour is largely calm and focused. There is still more to do to improve attitudes towards learning. Typically, girls are more engaged than boys, particularly for older pupils. Staff often see when pupils are not concentrating and act up on it, but this sometimes goes unnoticed. As a result, learning time is not consistently used effectively. Younger pupils are producing better work than in the past because of a renewed focus on learning. Subject leaders are positive about the tangible improvements in behaviour. They are able to focus more on improving the quality of education. Around the school site, there remains some boisterous but generally good-natured behaviour. Pupils say they would value more outside activities to do at lunchtime.

Pupils' attendance at school is much improved. The proportion of pupils who regularly miss school is decreasing. However, absence remains higher than the national average. Action taken to support parents and carers to ensure their children attend is effective. Nevertheless, the school does not hesitate to use the sanctions available, if required. Leaders are able to analyse attendance patterns well because of improved accuracy of records. Robust and timely checks are carried out to ascertain the whereabouts of absent pupils. The number of pupils who arrive late to lessons has also decreased but some pupils still arrive after a lesson has started.

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

Leadership of the school has been considerably strengthened since the previous inspection. There are clear roles and responsibilities that match the expertise of senior leaders. Leaders receive robust and rigorous, yet supportive, feedback and challenge from governors and each other. Leaders and governors have an accurate and detailed understanding of how well the school is doing. Although the school is not a member of the MAT, trust leaders are closely involved with the school and contribute to planning and evaluations. Leaders focus on the impact of the actions they take and review their priorities often. As a result, the key areas of focus and targets change as the school develops. This keeps plans and actions relevant and responsive to the changing needs of the school.

The principal has made a tangible difference to the effectiveness of the school. She is clear about what actions need to happen and in what order to bring them about. This approach strives to secure effective and sustainable change. The principal's approach has successfully developed positive relationships with parents. She has high expectations of staff and is ambitious for and passionate about the school. The school's staff support the principal and work hard to bring about improvements. Governors are quite right when they say staff 'go the extra mile' to deliver much-

needed changes.

Leaders have successfully tackled the safeguarding issues raised at the previous inspection. For example, staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are confident they know what to do if concerned about a pupil. Leaders check that pupils who learn away from the school site are safe and consider their welfare. Pupils have more opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves safe. These topics include issues relevant to them, such as gang violence and knife crime. Pupils say they feel safe and secure at school. They say that there are adults they would talk to if they were worried about anything.

New leadership of teaching and learning has quickly established the key priorities to develop this aspect of the school. Leaders have a thorough understanding of relevant educational theory and ideas. Training for subject leaders and teachers now focuses on teaching issues. Staff discuss approaches to learning more than they did in the past. Specific training in subject areas is less well established. Some teachers currently at the school are being supported with their teaching, both informally and formally.

A new SENCo was appointed in September 2019. The SENCo has started to address gaps in the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The educational needs of pupils with SEND are now more accurately identified than before. This is a positive start. Leaders recognise that teachers now need to use this information. This will focus support for pupils in lessons. Leaders have not yet started to analyse how other information can be used to understand and support the experiences of these pupils. This includes information about behaviour and attendance.

An external review of governance has been completed. The recruitment of new governors has successfully addressed many of the concerns raised by the external review. The governing body now has more relevant experience. This includes educational expertise, experience of governance and representation of the local community. Governors have new committee structures and business-like meetings. This keeps discussions sharply focused on the needs of the school. Governors are now successfully holding leaders to account. They monitor and support the progress the school is making well. Governors are passionate about the school and committed to shaping a positive future for pupils.

The external review of how the pupil premium funding is used has been completed. The review identified that funding was not utilised effectively in the past. There was not previously a focus on addressing the barriers which disadvantaged pupils face. The current strategy addresses these concerns well. Planned actions are linked to clear expectations of their impact. Leaders have also considered how support should be tailored to meet the needs of different disadvantaged pupils.

## **External support**

Harrop Fold has developed a strong and successful working relationship with the MAT. The required legal and financial checks are being undertaken to enable the school to join the trust. In the meantime, an executive principal from the trust works at the school. This arrangement results in timely identification of the support that the school needs. The effective use of this external support has played a large part in the improvements at the school since the last inspection. This includes enhancing the school's leadership capacity. Also, links are made for school staff to leaders and teachers in academies in the trust. Staff from the MAT play an important part in the school's strategic planning and monitor and evaluate the impact of actions that have been taken.

The school has been well supported by the local authority since the previous inspection. It has organised a range of support from a variety of sources. The local authority played an important role in establishing the school's partnership with the MAT. Now, the local authority continues to monitor the school's progress, and complements the range of support provided by the MAT. The local authority is confident in leaders and governors to improve the school's overall effectiveness.