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9 December 2019

Ms Karen Thomson
Executive leader
TBAP Aspire AP Academy
Commonside Road
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Dear Ms Thomson

Special measures monitoring inspection of TBAP Aspire AP Academy

Following my visit to your school on 19–20 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2019.

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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is 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 board of trustees and the chief executive officer, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take immediate action to safeguard all pupils by:
 - ensuring that all necessary checks are made when appointing staff to work in the school
 - ensuring that all temporary staff are suitably trained and inducted to work in this setting
 - systematically overhauling the child protection records of every pupil so that leaders demonstrate that they are doing everything they can to protect pupils from harm, and monitoring these records at regular intervals to ensure pupils' safety
 - maintaining clear, coherent records of the provision made for every pupil, especially those on part-time timetables, those who are taught at home and those who are taught off-site in alternative provision
 - tightening procedures to check the whereabouts of all pupils absent from school
 - making sure that the school's procedures to raise attendance and reduce persistent absence are effective.
- Raise achievement by:
 - gaining far greater stability in staffing and reducing the reliance on temporary staff
 - effectively reasserting the school's approach to managing pupils' behaviour in lessons
 - raising expectations of what pupils are capable of doing and providing them with suitably challenging work to do
 - establishing robust procedures for assessing how well pupils are doing from their starting points on entry to the school so that leaders can illustrate clearly whether pupils achieve as well as they should
 - using assessments to inform where further support is needed to enable all pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to make stronger progress than they do currently
 - making effective use of pupil premium funding
 - sharing the good practice evident in teaching in key stages 1 and 2 across

the school.

- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - establishing a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour and providing staff with high-quality training in applying the school's agreed behaviour policy
 - systematically recording all behaviour incidents and analysing this information routinely to inform leaders' actions to make improvements
 - implementing robust procedures for following up pupils' absence and doing much more to effectively reduce the high rates of persistent absence.
- Improve the school's leadership and management by:
 - gaining the full cooperation of all staff in acting collectively to make much-needed improvements to the school
 - restoring confidence among staff by providing them with a positive working environment in which they feel safe, valued and supported
 - building and sustaining further leadership capacity of school leaders and the trust so that proposed improvement plans are implemented fully, effectively and rapidly
 - strengthening the school's governance to provide leaders with support and challenge and ensuring that all safety requirements are met.

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

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 19 November 2019 to 20 November 2019

Evidence

I scrutinised your records of checks of the suitability of staff to work with children, your school action plan, and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I held meetings with you, the interim headteacher, other school leaders and staff. I also met with the chief executive officer from Beckmead multi-academy trust (Beckmead), together with school leaders from that trust, all of whom are supporting the school. I met with a representative of the local authority. I spoke on the telephone with the chief executive officer of TBAP multi-academy trust (TBAP).

I visited all classrooms with you and the interim headteacher to see the pupils during their lessons and spoke to pupils in a meeting and also at lunchtime. I spoke with parents to gather their views of the school.

Currently, there is no local governing body in place; I did not consider the areas for improvement that relate to this aspect of leadership and management.

Context

Aspire Academy is a school that provides alternative provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. Most pupils are White British. There are currently 54 pupils at the school.

There have been significant changes since May 2019. As interim executive leader, you are working closely with the regional schools commissioner. An interim headteacher took up her role in September 2019. Beckmead is already supporting the school. Beckmead trustees have assigned a school leader to work at the Aspire Academy for five days per week. Another leader has recently been assigned to consider the organisation of the curriculum. This leader is working at the school two days each week. The chief executive officer of Beckmead visits the school regularly to check on progress. The local authority is also supporting school leaders, checking the progress that the school is making towards the priorities written in the improvement plans.

TBAP are in consultation to transfer the school to another specialist multi-academy trust in the spring term of 2020.

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

Since the inspection in May 2019, you have resolved many of the safeguarding concerns that were identified at that time. You have introduced better systems and

processes that staff are increasingly using well to ensure pupils' safety and welfare. The designated child protection leaders and staff are appropriately trained to spot any signs that indicate a pupil may be at significant risk. Staff know who to report concerns to and understand the importance of doing so promptly. Temporary staff receive safeguarding information when they join. Leaders provide all permanent and temporary staff with appropriate safeguarding updates.

You have significantly reduced the number of pupils who are on part-time timetables, school registers are systematically completed, and absence is rigorously followed up. Attendance remains low, but you have confidence that the information you have is now accurate. You continue to work on reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

You have ensured that the necessary checks are carried out when appointing staff. Although there remains some long-term staff absence, this is diminishing. You still contract supply teaching and support staff, but these work at the school for longer periods of time, which is helping pupils with stability.

In the summer term, you needed to focus on ensuring that the school met health and safety requirements and you did so successfully. Since September, the new interim headteacher, you, the local authority and Beckmead have formed an effective partnership. You are working productively together to improve the many areas for improvement identified at the inspection. Improvements are now happening systematically and with appropriate urgency.

You have made sure that other middle leaders are currently reviewing the behaviour policies and practices. There is greater consistency in how adults manage behaviour incidents. Since September, you have started to introduce more therapeutic approaches. The new 'Voyager' classroom is proving successful. Older pupils, who receive their education in this new provision, say they enjoy the class and are focusing better on their learning as a result. You still use other alternative provision to offer pupils subjects such as carpentry and looking after animals, where you do not offer this experience on the school site.

Leaders now have an understanding and accurate record of behaviour incidents. The information is analysed and currently leaders are writing individual behaviour plans for pupils. These plans still need to be communicated to staff and effectively implemented so that pupils are supported in managing and regulating their own behaviour and choices. Even though they are reduced, there is still more to do to lessen fixed-term exclusions and the need for physical intervention.

Staff spoken to are feeling more positive about the changes made since September. They are confident that the interim headteacher and other leaders are making the right improvements. They feel they can give their views and staff say they are listened to. The local authority is beginning to place more pupils at the school.

There is still much to do to increase adults' expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is especially the case in key stages 3 and 4. Here, improvement remains very fragile. Since September, pupils have experienced some positive changes to the subjects and the way they are taught, but the curriculum is narrow with few subjects that build pupils' motivation and interest in learning. You are starting to design an improved curriculum that helps pupils know and remember more, rather than a series of disconnected activities. Where the quality of teaching is best, well planned and sequenced, such as in mathematics, pupils respond well, there is a clear purpose and behaviour is calm.

At times of transition between activities, there are fewer behaviour issues because teachers now move rather than pupils. However, if adults are late, pupils have to wait too long for the start of their next lesson.

The environment in the secondary phase remains in need of development with very few good-quality resources for pupils. Leaders are in the process of upgrading the corridors and classrooms to make the areas more inviting and useful for pupils. Equally, staff recognise that they require more subject-specific training to meet the needs of pupils successfully.

The quality of provision in the primary phase remains stronger than the secondary phase. Classrooms are purposeful and there is a sense of calm and learning across the three classes. Staff have positive relationships with pupils. Staff use good-quality resources and clear explanations so that pupils gain the knowledge and understanding they need to succeed. Pupils are proud of their achievements and present their work well. Many return to mainstream schools ready for the demands of the key stage 3 curriculum. More could still be done to help provide pupils with strategies for their personal and social management.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim leadership, working together with a partner multi-academy trust and the local authority, continue to address the areas for improvement, in a systematic way. The school's action plans are suitably ambitious, and the priorities are appropriately sequenced. Leaders at all levels have a good understanding of what they are trying to achieve.

Leadership capacity has been increased through the appointment of an experienced interim headteacher and sharing of responsibilities among the school leadership team. Colleagues work together and share information more systematically. There is evidence that staff are being led and managed more effectively since September. Representatives of Beckmead trust are working closely with school leaders to develop better systems and procedures so that improvements are long lasting.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Current leaders are united in their determination to pursue rapid improvement. They are supporting each other well.
- Staff have more confidence in leaders. They understand what needs to be changed and support the decisions leaders are making.
- Leaders have an accurate view of where the school is currently and the next steps in making further and necessary improvements.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Currently, there is no governing body to hold leaders fully to account for the progress and improvements being made. The areas for improvement from the section 5 inspection that relate to governance remain the case.
- A number of changes made have been very recent. Systems are very new. For example, the work on devising individual behaviour plans is very new. Leaders are yet to fully establish their changes and improvements. At this stage, much remains fragile and it is too early to determine lasting impact.

External support

The school is due to transfer to a new multi-academy trust. The transfer is in the early stages. The school is benefiting from extensive leadership support for improving pupils' behaviour, welfare and designing the curriculum from the Beckmead trust.

The local authority is also supporting school improvement through regular visits to the school. They are supporting and challenging leaders effectively. Interim leaders are taking on advice and guidance promptly.

The school has received visits from representatives of the Department for Education. Interim leaders have been swift to accept support and guidance.