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Mrs Charlotte Cartlidge  
Headteacher  
Adelaide Heath Academy  
Longridge  
Knutsford  
Cheshire  
WA16 8PA

Dear Mrs Cartlidge

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Adelaide Heath Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 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 March 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cheshire East. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Will Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Take urgent action to make sure that pupils are safe, by:
  - establishing a calm and orderly environment where all pupils and staff feel safe
  - providing further training and support for all staff to equip them with the necessary skills to deal effectively with pupils' challenging behaviour
  - ensuring the designated safeguarding leader has the skills, resources, support and authority to carry out the role effectively
  - making sure that record-keeping is meticulous
  - ensuring that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through a carefully planned curriculum programme
  - ensuring that all risks are assessed thoroughly, actions to manage risks are suitable and checks are in place to make sure agreed plans are adhered to
  - carrying out rigorous and robust checks on all alternative providers to make sure that pupils are safe when learning off site
  - reducing persistent absence and improving attendance so that pupils are in school on time every day.
- Meet pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs effectively so that they are ready to learn, by:
  - making sure pupils understand how to keep themselves and others safe both in school, online and in the community
  - making sure staff and pupils have an accurate understanding of what bullying is
  - following up assiduously on all instances of bullying
  - providing all staff with effective training and support so that they can meet pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs
  - ensuring that pupils receive the help and support they need as set out in their education, health and care plans.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment so that all groups of pupils, especially the disadvantaged, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able, make much better progress by ensuring that all teachers:
  - meet the requirements set out in the teachers' standards
  - have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - plan work which pupils find interesting and purposeful so that they develop positive attitudes and essential behaviours for learning, including resilience, independence and perseverance

- plan learning which engages and challenges pupils, particularly the most able, and makes the best use of lesson time
  - assess pupils' learning accurately and set them work which is well matched to their abilities
  - make sure that pupils know how to improve their work and are given timely opportunities to respond to teachers' advice and correct mistakes
  - put in place interventions to help pupils catch up so that all make better progress.
- 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 trustees, governors, leaders, staff, pupils and parents
  - ensuring that leaders and governors 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 school's improvement plan and hold senior leaders to account
  - building the capacity of the local governing body, including through relevant training and support, so that governors have the skills, experience and expertise to expedite school improvement
  - providing middle leaders with time, resources and support to ensure that they contribute to the raising of standards in their subjects across the school
  - checking regularly on the progress that the different groups of pupils make and taking swift action if any group is not achieving as well as it should
  - making sure that monitoring focuses on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning
  - planning a cohesive curriculum, which meets the needs of pupils and enables teachers to build on pupils' prior learning across the full range of subjects
  - ensuring that parents receive regular, up to date information about how well their children are getting on
  - making sure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is well used to improve outcomes for eligible pupils.

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

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 27 November 2019**

### **Evidence**

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, safeguarding leaders and the CEO of the Adelaide Academy Trust (AAT). I also met with a number of subject leaders, a group of pupils and a group of staff. I spoke with pupils informally. I had a telephone conversation with a member of the school improvement board (SIB), a representative from the local authority and a consultant who supports the school. I met with two other members of the SIB, including the chair of the board of trustees.

### **Context**

There have been many changes at the school since the last monitoring inspection in May 2019. The headteacher has been made permanent in her role. The leader who was the executive headteacher is now the CEO of the AAT. The school now has a stable staff team and is no longer reliant on temporary teachers. Some staff have joined from Adelaide School, which is an outstanding school within the AAT. Others have joined from outside the trust.

Leaders are developing a group of middle leaders to lead on important aspects of the school's work. For example, a deputy special educational needs coordinator has been appointed who works at the school on a full-time basis. Middle leaders have also been appointed to oversee the development of pupils' reading, to lead on the school's anti-bullying strategy and to manage careers education, information, advice and guidance.

The number of pupils on roll at the school has continued to decline. There are now only 10 pupils on the school's roll. These pupils are in Years 9 to 11. Only four of these pupils are currently educated at the school. The school teaches a further 28 pupils who are on the roll of Adelaide School. Almost all of these pupils attend Adelaide Heath on a full-time basis. These pupils are in a range of year groups from Year 4 to Year 10.

Since the last inspection, the school has effectively merged with the Adelaide Hub. The Adelaide Hub was a satellite provision of Adelaide School. Until recently, it was in the same building as Adelaide Heath but was a separate provision under the unique reference number (URN) of the Adelaide School. The merger has meant that the school now caters for pupils in key stage 2 as well as pupils in the secondary phase. Pupils who attended, or were due to attend, the Adelaide Hub continue to be on the roll of Adelaide School. This means that they now permanently attend a school that is different to the one where they are on the roll and which is not currently registered to teach primary-age pupils.

In September 2019, leaders changed the school's name from St John's Wood Academy to Adelaide Heath Academy. Leaders say that this was to align the school

more closely with the AAT and to symbolise a fresh start for the school.

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

Following a lengthy period of stagnation, pupils are beginning to benefit from clear improvements to the quality of education. Leaders have made important changes to the overall design of the curriculum. They have broadened the curriculum significantly following a period in which the curriculum was narrowed. Pupils now study a much wider range of subjects. For example, they now study science, design and technology, and the humanities.

Pupils' experience in lessons has been transformed since the last monitoring inspection. This reflects the notable improvements that have been made to the quality of education. For example, teachers are now more effective in the way that they structure new learning within lessons and question pupils. They are also beginning to improve the way that they cater for pupils' differing needs, although this is an area that leaders have identified as requiring further work.

Teachers have begun to consider how their subject curriculums can be developed. Most teachers have mapped their curriculum against the national curriculum to ensure that pupils benefit from a broad and ambitious range of content. Despite these improvements, pupils still do not benefit from consistently well-planned and ambitious curriculums in different subjects. Typically, teachers have not given enough thought to what pupils should know, understand and be able to do in their subjects. They have also not thought enough about how best to order pupils' learning so that pupils know and remember more over time.

Leaders have begun to focus on improving pupils' reading. They understand the fundamental importance of reading to pupils' educational prospects and life chances. They have raised the profile of reading among pupils. Pupils take part in reading sessions at the start of each day. Some pupils read alone, whereas others read as part of a group. Leaders have invested in a commercial scheme to help pupils to develop as readers. These plans are in the very early stages of implementation. Pupils currently have very mixed attitudes towards reading. Older pupils tend to be negative. Pupils who struggle to read accurately and fluently are not supported well. Pupils with poor knowledge of phonics are not helped to catch up with where they should be. As a result, poor reading skills continue to be a barrier for some pupils.

Pupils who left Year 11 in the summer had not achieved well during their time at the school. They gained very few qualifications. Their achievement reflected the inadequate education they received at the school. Positively, leaders' information indicates that all of these pupils are currently in education, employment or training. It is too soon to judge the impact of recent improvements to the quality of education. Evidence from visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that pupils are much more engaged and motivated. It is clear that they are taking far

greater care with their work. Despite this, pupils still typically find it difficult to explain what they have learned and how their knowledge is building in different subjects.

Leaders have developed a coherent strategy for developing pupils' cultural capital. They have introduced a series of 'pledges' that outline pupils' entitlement to a range of experiences that are designed to enhance their knowledge and understanding of what the world has to offer. These include, for example, trips to the theatre and visits to places such as the seaside and the zoo.

Pupils throughout the school benefit from an increasingly well-structured programme of careers education. Pupils are helped to gain knowledge of a wide range of jobs. This is starting to raise pupils' aspirations. Some pupils are due to begin a programme of work experience soon. For some, this will complement the vocational education that they receive at Reaseheath College.

Leaders have made significant changes to the therapeutic curriculum. They have also improved the way that they monitor and evaluate pupils' personal and social development. This has enabled them to carefully match a range of therapeutic interventions to pupils' needs. For example, some pupils take part in Thai boxing, whereas others practise yoga. These interventions contribute to a significant improvement in pupils' well-being.

Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly. The school site is now much calmer and more orderly. During my visits to lessons, pupils behaved well and were keen to learn. This reflects a positive sea-change in pupils' attitudes towards school. Leaders' information indicates that the frequency of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced. For example, they have only issued one fixed-term exclusion since September 2019, and that was not for a pupil on the school's roll. Pupils confirmed that the improvements to behaviour have been dramatic. In particular, they noted how 'teachers are much better at calming us down'. Pupils are now far more positive about staff. They say that they trust staff and feel very well supported.

Pupils' attendance improved last year. This was due to improved systems for rewarding regular attendance and challenging unnecessary absence. Leaders can demonstrate how they have helped pupils with a history of sporadic attendance to have less time off school. However, rates of absence and persistent absence remain too high. So far this year, rates of absence are similar to those for the previous year. Attendance is higher among younger pupils who are on roll at Adelaide School.

The school's approach to challenging bullying is exemplary. Pupils have a detailed knowledge of different types of bullying, such as that which takes place online. Leaders have introduced a number of strategies to prevent bullying. For example, anti-bullying ambassadors reinforce important messages about bullying. The pupils I spoke to told me that bullying is a 'thing of the past' at the school. Leaders' records indicate that there have been no instances of known bullying during the current school year.

Pupils are helped to gain an age-appropriate knowledge and understanding of different risks. The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is very well planned and explores potential risks relating to e-safety, transport, drugs and gangs.

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

The headteacher, supported by other leaders, is enacting an ambitious and urgent plan to improve the school. She has established a coherent vision for the school, which places the development of pupils' independence and resilience at the heart of the school's work. Leaders now have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their plans reflect a clear understanding of what and how different aspects of the school's work should improve.

The staff are highly motivated and share leaders' ambitious vision for the quality of education. They have undertaken training which has contributed directly to the improvements that have been made. For example, staff now manage and de-escalate pupils' behaviour more effectively because of recent training.

Leaders have improved the way that staff engage with parents and carers. For example, a weekly 'parent partners' session provides parents with the opportunity to meet staff and see the work of the school for themselves. This work is helping to increase parental confidence in the school. This improved engagement is reflected in higher rates of attendance at parents' evenings.

Leaders are keen to harness the enthusiasm of staff. Staff told me that they 'feel empowered and trusted to make changes.' A number of middle leadership positions have been created. Some of these roles seek to build upon recently established strengths, such as a position to lead on the school's anti-bullying work. Others, such as a reading lead, aim to address areas of weakness.

Leaders have further consolidated the improvements made to safeguarding since being placed in special measures. Leaders work well with a range of external agencies to keep pupils safe. Leaders have appropriate systems in place for ensuring the safety, as far as is possible, of pupils who are not educated on the school site.

Trustees and members of the SIB provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders. They have recently begun to devise plans to transfer pupils from the Adelaide Hub to the roll of Adelaide Heath Academy. They are also planning to contact the Department for Education to ensure that the school is registered to teach pupils in Years 3 to 6. Trustees and members of the SIB are committed to ensuring that leaders do their best for all pupils. They carefully monitor and hold leaders to account for their work with pupils who are not educated on the school site.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Leadership of the school has been strengthened considerably since the last inspection. The new headteacher is now secure in her role and has won the confidence of pupils and staff. Together, school leaders are now driving a coherent and ambitious plan to improve the school.
- The morale of staff has been transformed. Staff feel energised and go about their jobs with exceptional enthusiasm. This reflects the consideration that leaders show for the well-being of their staff.
- Leaders have made important changes to the overall design of the curriculum. The curriculum has been broadened significantly to reflect the ambition that leaders have of all pupils.
- Leaders have overseen significant improvements to pupils' behaviour. The school now provides a calmer and more purposeful environment in which to learn. Relationships between pupils and staff have improved markedly.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Given the school's turbulent journey, the improvements that leaders have made to the quality of education are recent. Pupils now benefit from a curriculum that is more ambitious. However, work to develop the quality of the curriculum in each subject is in its early stages. Pupils do not consistently benefit from carefully planned and well-sequenced curriculums in each subject.
- Leaders have not yet focused sufficiently on developing subject-specific approaches to teaching.
- The school's work to develop pupils' reading is in its infancy. At present, leaders are not doing enough to help pupils to become more accurate and fluent readers. In particular, the weakest readers, including those who need help to develop their knowledge of phonics, are not well supported.

### **External support**

Leaders have decided to reduce the range of external support provided to the school. This has helped leaders to develop their own strategies for improving the school. This clarity has enabled leaders to make improvements to many aspects of the school's work. Support for the school is now being provided from within the AAT. In particular, staff are supported by lead practitioners and hubs for each subject. Despite this more coherent approach, the school is still in the early stages of developing the quality of education.

The school's work continues to be overseen by an external consultant. This support has helped leaders to understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has also helped them to identify which aspects of the school's work require the most urgent development.



## **Areas for improvement**

- Trustees, members of the SIB and leaders must urgently:
  - amend the school’s roll so that it accurately reflects those pupils receiving full-time education at the school
  - ensure that the school’s registration reflects the full age range of pupils educated at the school.