

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Diane Reynard
Executive Principal
North West Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre
Tongue Lane
Meanwood
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS6 4QD

Dear Mrs Reynard

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to North West Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre

Following my visit to your school on 7 January 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at the previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- continue to bring about planned improvement but with a closer focus on the requirements of the education inspection framework.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive principal, other senior leaders, pupils, the chair of governors, a representative of the local authority, and two groups of staff. The school improvement plan was also evaluated and found to identify and focus on the key areas for improvement effectively. I undertook visits to lessons in two of the four main school sites and looked at pupils' books in

classrooms. All visits to lessons were carried out with senior leaders. A discussion on findings was held at the end of each session. A range of documents were scrutinised, including the single central register, safeguarding policy, the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation (SEF).

Context

Since the previous inspection, the executive principal has continued to develop the school leadership team. New staff, including an assistant headteacher, three new middle leaders and two new staff members, have been appointed. The impact of their work is beginning to contribute to the school's overall improvement.

Main findings

School leaders and governors have made a concerted effort to bring about improvement in the areas outlined in the previous inspection report. An overhaul and redesign of the curriculum have taken place. The introduction of different learning pathways has enabled individual pupils' needs to be better met. The most able pupils now follow an independent learning pathway. This is based on the national curriculum, with a particular emphasis on life skills. Pupils with a high level of need follow a sensory curriculum pathway. This pathway is informally organised and specifically designed to meet their individual needs.

A new system for assessing pupils' work has been put in place. It is used across all of the school sites. This system links to targets identified on pupils' individual education, health and care plans. This enables staff to check that work set within the curriculum matches pupils' needs.

A board of governors has now replaced the interim executive board (IEB). The board has only met once, so the impact of its work is not yet fully known. Making the change from the IEB to a governing body demonstrates progress in developing school governance. The chair of the IEB is now the chair of governors. This has led to continuity and a smooth transition.

Staff and leaders have recognised that oracy and communication play a vital part in pupils' development. For example, staff are clear that difficult behaviour and an inability to communicate are linked. School leaders have formed strong links with an oracy project. This has helped staff to develop pupils' communication skills, particularly in learning how to hold a social conversation. This, leaders believe, has reduced incidents of difficult behaviour, particularly for younger pupils.

Leaders have also appointed a curriculum leader for mathematics. The new leader has already reviewed mathematics teaching within the school. As a result of this review, support for staff who find mathematics a challenge has been put in place. Pupils who I talked to told me that mathematics was now more interesting and fun. Work in pupils' books showed that pupils are now developing stronger mathematical skills.

The last inspection report asked the school to further develop the expertise and ability of middle leaders. School leaders have recently appointed three new middle leaders. They are busy developing their roles. They have identified which areas need further improvement. Examples of this include developing the mathematics curriculum and supporting newly qualified teachers.

The previous inspection report identified that activities planned for sixth-form students did not offer enough challenge for the most able pupils. Leaders have now ensured that a broader range of accreditation is on offer. This allows pupils and students to study GCSE qualifications in both key stage 4 and the sixth form.

A new assistant headteacher has taken on, as part of his role, improvement of careers advice for students. The school's plans show that work experience opportunities are being put in place. Pupils are also being offered careers interviews.

Leaders are taking effective steps towards improving the school's overall effectiveness. The school development plan outlines clear actions for improvement, many of which have now been achieved.

The school SEF accurately describes the progress made since the previous inspection report. The headings within the SEF reflect the new Ofsted framework. However, the actions described are closely aligned to the previous framework. In order to prepare for their next inspection, school leaders need to align their evidence of further progress more closely to the curriculum and the education inspection framework.

External support

The school has received support from the local authority since the previous inspection. Support has included termly visits. Visit reports chart the indications of improvement clearly and show that support has now been reduced, as senior leaders have confidently brought about change in their own right.

Plans are in place for the school to join Wellspring Academy Trust on 1 April 2020. However, it was not clear at the time of the visit how much progress had been made towards this goal.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the Director of Children's Services for Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas
Her Majesty's Inspector