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Dr Bartlett
Head of School
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Dear Dr Bartlett

Special measures monitoring inspection of Shenley Academy

Following my visit with Lois Kelly, Ofsted Inspector, and Marie McMahon, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 4–5 February 2020, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 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.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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 and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Niall Gallagher

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that there is rapid improvement in pupils' achievement, especially pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, by ensuring that:
 - pupils with SEND receive individualised and targeted support to allow them to successfully access learning and make the progress they are capable of
 - all leaders systematically evaluate the performance of groups of pupils so that they can spot trends and patterns more quickly
 - leaders monitor and scrutinise teachers' assessment of pupils' progress more carefully, so they understand what it is telling them and can intervene quickly to close any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - the curriculum in mathematics, especially in key stage 3, is sufficiently challenging to enable pupils to make progress
 - the additional funding the school receives has a positive impact on the outcomes of those groups of pupils it is intended to help.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make good progress by ensuring that teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of pupils and what they can achieve
 - plan tasks that meet pupils' needs and abilities so that work is not too easy or too challenging
 - make effective checks on pupils' understanding in lessons
 - use learning resources that engage pupils.
- Urgently reduce the amount of time some pupils miss from their education because of being absent from school or excluded for a fixed period of time.
- Leaders and the trust ensure that proper procedures are followed before a pupil is taken off the school roll.
- Improve the accuracy of the recording of pupils' attendance so that leaders can safeguard all pupils at the school.

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 second monitoring inspection on 4 February 2020 to 5 February 2020

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the head of school and other school leaders. Inspectors met with members of the trust, including the chief executive officer. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during break and lunchtimes. They also met with groups of pupils formally to discuss their views of the school. Inspectors met with a range of staff, including the special educational needs coordinator, and those at an early stage of their teaching career.

Inspectors visited lessons to evaluate the quality of education and pupils' behaviour. Inspectors reviewed pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning in lessons. Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' action plans and attendance and behaviour records.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 September 2019, there has been significant staff movement. 15 members of staff have left the school during this time. This is in addition to the 26 members of staff who left the school between the inspection that took place in October 2018 and the previous monitoring inspection. Leaders are in the process of recruiting staff to replace those who left last term. There have also been changes to the school's leadership team. Four assistant headteachers have been appointed since the previous monitoring inspection.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, leaders have taken the decision to close the sixth form. At the time of the last inspection, there were 71 students in the sixth form studying for a football qualification organised and managed by Birmingham City Football Club. Leaders have arranged for students to continue their education on appropriate courses at another school within the trust.

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

There has been improvement in some areas of the school since the last monitoring inspection. However, the rate of improvement has not been as quick as leaders expected.

During the last inspection, inspectors noticed improvements in mathematics. These have continued. Mathematics is becoming a strength of the school. The curriculum in mathematics has been revised and it is now sequenced in a logical and sensible way. This is also the case in English, which has also strengthened further since the

previous inspection. Pupils' experiences in English and mathematics are now positive.

In other subjects, such as history, geography and modern foreign languages, the curriculum is not well planned. Topics jump around randomly. Leaders know that this is stopping pupils from developing their knowledge and skills effectively. School leaders are being supported by the trust to improve this. They have plans in place to redesign the curriculum. Although leaders have started this work, it is going to take them longer to achieve than they initially thought. Leaders want all staff to be involved in developing the curriculum. They have adopted a sensible approach. They began by training staff on what a well-sequenced curriculum looks like. Staff are now working on new curriculum plans that will be introduced in September 2020. This is also the time when the school will revert to a three-year key stage 3.

Although leaders are working hard and there are signs of improvement, the quality of education is still not where it should be. Assessment is still not being used effectively to check how well pupils have understood their work. Moreover, teachers do not always use the information they do have to intervene effectively. Sometimes, teachers ignore pupils' poor test marks and move on to new topics without making sure that the pupils are ready.

The curriculum is still not ambitious enough for all pupils, including the most able and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is because teachers do not consider pupils' needs when they plan. Also, because there is still some poor behaviour in lessons, teachers tend to opt for easier activities to avoid resistance from pupils. This is not the case in mathematics. In mathematics, the most able are typically given work that challenges them appropriately. This is helping them to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Provision for pupils with SEND is getting better, and there has been some improvement since the last monitoring inspection. All staff have received appropriate training. For example, there was a recent training session on how to support pupils with autism. Moreover, all pupils with SEND now have learning passports. The learning passports provide strategies for teachers to use. Teachers are required to choose three strategies for each pupil. However, inspectors noticed that teachers tend to choose strategies that are easy to implement, rather than those that will have the greatest impact.

Pupils' poor attendance and punctuality is restricting the pace of improvement. Too many pupils are persistently absent from the school. Leaders are seeking to address this, and it has been a key focus for them since the previous monitoring inspection. There are some signs that their plans are working, albeit slowly. There are posters and displays on the corridor walls highlighting the importance of regular attendance. High attendance is celebrated and rewarded. Furthermore, to engage parents, there are monthly prize draws for families. The winning family receives a supermarket voucher.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have a clear plan to improve the school. The head of school is supported by leaders from the trust. She is also helped by a large team of senior leaders, some of whom are new in post. The support she receives from senior leaders is at times variable. Because of this, she is sometimes required to function at a level that is unlikely to be sustainable. For example, it is unlikely to be sustainable for her to make daily calls to pupils who are absent from the school.

Before the last monitoring inspection, leaders had worked hard to improve behaviour and raise standards. Staff told us that the changes were positive. They said that there was an improved culture in the school. Leaders expected to push on from there. But, despite their efforts, this has been stalled by high levels of staff movement. This has meant that the systems introduced to manage behaviour and improve attendance are not yet working as well as they could be. Consequently, attendance remains too low, and the way staff deal with poor behaviour is still inconsistent. However, staffing is now beginning to settle, and leaders are confident that these systems will be strengthened as a result.

Leaders are committed to improving the quality of education. English and mathematics have improved. Pupils now have better experiences in these subjects. However, there are still significant weaknesses in the curriculum elsewhere. The trust provides leaders with valuable support. A member of the trust spends one day per week in the school. He is working alongside leaders to help shape the curriculum. The trust has provided training for staff on how to create an effective curriculum and has brokered support from other schools within the trust. For example, leaders from other schools are working with subject leaders to create well-sequenced curriculum plans in modern foreign languages and humanities.

Because the quality of education is not yet good enough, all pupils including disadvantaged pupils are still not doing as well as they should. Trustees and school leaders have considered how the additional funding for these pupils is being used. They have begun to address some of these weaknesses through the appointment of additional staff to support pupils with their literacy and numeracy development. However, there is still some way to go.

Leaders are seeking to improve opportunities for pupils' personal development. Each day begins with a short personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lesson and ends with a session on careers. Although pupils now receive more PSHE and careers education than they did previously, the quality is variable. For example, during the inspection, pupils were learning about what a marine biologist does, but some pupils became disinterested because their teachers did not understand what the role involved well enough to be able to ignite an interest.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders and trustees were concerned about the sixth form. They were concerned the course was not appropriate for everyone. They have responded quickly. Rather than wait until the end of the year, they were swift to identify appropriate courses for students at another school within the trust. They have now closed the sixth form. Leaders hope to open the sixth form again in the future.

During the inspection, we considered staff workload. Staff generally feel happier in their work than they did at the time of the last monitoring inspection, and most say that they feel supported by leaders.

A small number of pupils continue to have some of their education away from the school. Leaders ensure that they are safe when they attend other settings. Since the last inspection, a number of pupils have left the school roll. This includes a small number whose parents have elected to home educate them. Leaders follow the proper procedures before a pupil is taken off the school roll. They maintain comprehensive records for those who leave. These records include details of their communication with the pupil's parents and the local authority.

External support

The school does not receive any external support.