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Ms Jane Bailey
Principal
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Dear Ms Bailey

Special measures monitoring inspection of Fulwood Academy

Following my visit with Alyson Middlemas, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 30–31 January 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 February 2019. 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 action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Erica Sharman

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that senior leaders, including governors and trustees, provide effective leadership and urgently improve the quality of education at the school by:
 - creating a culture in which pupils feel safe and are safe
 - having high expectations of staff and pupils
 - having an effective leadership structure that has clear and appropriate roles and responsibilities that reflect the needs of the school
 - prioritising strong leadership in the crucial areas of teaching and learning and behaviour
 - making their own decisions based on sound educational rationale rather than acting on piecemeal advice from different external sources
 - making sure that subject leaders have the necessary skills and expertise to lead their respective areas effectively
 - acting on the recommendations outlined in the recent review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding so that disadvantaged pupils make at least the same progress as other pupils nationally
 - designing a curriculum that enables all pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills and make the best possible progress.
- Urgently improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve
 - insist that pupils complete work and take pride in its presentation
 - use effective classroom management skills to create a positive environment for learning
 - provide the right level of challenge for their pupils, particularly the most able
 - sequence learning in a way that enables pupils to make links between what they already know and things they are learning afresh, so that they can build on their previous learning
 - use questioning effectively to probe and develop pupils' understanding.
- Rapidly improve outcomes by ensuring that pupils in all year groups, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able, make good progress in all subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Improve pupils' personal development and welfare by ensuring that:
 - pupils are confident that staff will deal effectively with incidents of bullying

- the culture in the school is based on mutually respectful relationships.
- Take immediate action to improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that:
 - disruption to learning in lessons is eliminated
 - pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning
 - pupils conduct themselves in a calm and mature manner around the school
 - pupils arrive punctually at their lessons
 - pupils show respect for their teachers and other adults and do what is asked of them
 - teachers have the required skills to manage behaviour effectively in their classrooms
 - senior leaders make the high standards of behaviour that are expected of them explicitly clear to pupils
 - the attendance of pupils increases, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils
 - the number of fixed-term exclusions for disadvantaged pupils decreases.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 30 January 2020 to 31 January 2020

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim principal, senior leaders and a group of subject leaders. The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the trust board.

Inspectors looked closely at English, science, mathematics and history. We met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at pupils' work.

Context

Several leaders have left the school since the last inspection. This includes the principal who was appointed shortly before the last inspection took place and the recently appointed vice principal. These both left in December 2019. A new principal has been appointed and will take up post after Easter 2020. There is currently an interim principal in place. There has also been considerable change in middle leadership. There are new subject leaders for English, mathematics, history, geography, science, computer science and modern foreign languages. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has also been appointed. Overall, 30 members a staff have left the school and 28 have been appointed.

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

Leaders are starting to bring about improvement in the quality of education that pupils receive. Teachers are raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is particularly true for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is an accurate register of the needs of these pupils. The new SENCo has provided training and guidance to teachers on how to support pupils with SEND. These pupils can engage more fully with their learning as a result.

In many subjects, leaders are improving the curriculum. Leaders have identified the knowledge that pupils need to learn. This is taught in an appropriate order so that new knowledge is built on previous learning. However, these improvements are at an early stage. As a result, some subjects are further ahead than others. For example, some subject areas do not cover the depth and breadth of the national curriculum at key stage 3.

Leaders are aware that pupils in Years 10 and 11 have gaps in their knowledge because of the poor teaching that they have received in previous years. They are providing these pupils with the guidance and support that they need to be successful in their GCSE examinations. Pupils are aware that they have to catch up. They are grateful to teachers for the extra support that they provide.

Teachers said that the introduction of the new curriculum has been very helpful. They know what to teach and when to teach it. The local teaching school is providing help and support to teachers to help them to improve their teaching. Teachers said that they value the time that they are given in their department areas to share good practice.

During learning time, most pupils behave well. Pupils said that learning is not disrupted as much as it used to be. There is a clear behaviour policy in place. When teachers use this policy consistently, poor behaviour is stopped quickly. However, pupils said that there are still teachers who give pupils too many chances to behave before using the behaviour policy.

Despite the improvements to the curriculum, pupils still do not remember their learning well. Published data shows that the progress that pupils make by the end of Year 11 has been well below the national average for several years. This did not improve in 2019.

Leaders have developed a strong personal development curriculum. The curriculum is delivered through social science lessons in Years 7 to 11. There is also an assembly schedule that supports the taught curriculum. Pupils are taught how to be responsible citizens. They learn to respect people who have different beliefs and values to their own.

Leaders have taken several actions recently to bring about improvements to pupils' behaviour. They have made changes to lunchtime arrangements so that fewer pupils are in the canteen at the same time. There are more staff on duty at breaktimes and lunchtimes. All staff monitor the corridors at changeover of lessons. Despite this, some pupils do not move promptly from one lesson to the next. Some pupils run around the corridors and there is some pushing. Pupils sometimes do not respond well to teachers when they are challenged about their behaviour. These pupils are also sometimes late for their lessons.

Attendance remains below the national average, with little sign of improvement. The attendance rates for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are particularly low. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has increased this year. Furthermore, punctuality to school remains a concern.

The proportion of pupils who are excluded for a fixed period has fluctuated over time, but it remains above the national average, with only a slight improvement.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders prioritised the improvement of behaviour and safeguarding immediately after the Ofsted judgement. Considerable improvements were made in the last school year and this was reflected in the last monitoring visit. However, since then

the improvements made in attendance have stalled. This is because the leaders responsible for pupils' attendance left the school. Attendance was not effectively monitored as a result. New leaders have now been appointed.

Leaders have made a several strong appointments to middle leadership and teaching. Many of these started at the beginning of the school year. This, together with training, has raised teachers ambition for all pupils. Middle leaders are now driving improvements in the quality of education.

Leadership responsibilities have been restructured. The clearer lines of responsibility ensure that staff are held to account for improvements in their areas. However, the lack of a substantive principal has led to some lack of direction. While plans are in place, leaders are reluctant to make any substantial changes without the new principal. Recently, trust leaders have managed to get agreement that the new principal will come into the school one day a week. This will help to ensure that staff understand the vision of the new principal.

There is now strong leadership for the quality of education. Leaders recognise the importance of prioritising a strong and progressive curriculum. Training given at the end of the last school year has helped subject leaders to develop an appropriate curriculum for their area. However, this is the start of the journey. Currently, departments work independently and there is little collaboration to ensure that pupils' learning is reinforced across all subjects. For example, the strategies that English teachers use to help pupils with their extended writing are not across the school.

Safeguarding remains effective. Leaders ensure that safeguarding records are thorough. All appropriate checks are made when staff are recruited. All staff receive safeguarding training so that they know the signs of a pupil in need of help. Leaders ensure that they act promptly to secure appropriate help for pupils when necessary.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They said that bullying does still happen but is much less frequent than in the past. They said that most teachers deal with bullying effectively. However, pupils told inspectors that some teachers do not deal with bullying as well as others. Not all teachers adopt a zero-tolerance stance to bullying.

This is a single school trust and the trustees form the governing body of the school. Trustees have recently completed a review of governance and an audit of the skills that they bring to the school. They hold leaders to account for the progress that the school is making. However, they could not demonstrate that all trustees have a full understanding of the role of governance in a school.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Teachers have confidence in the interim principal.
- Leaders have strengthened middle leadership. These leaders are able to bring about improvements in the quality of education despite the instability in leadership at the highest levels.
- Leaders and teachers want the very best for the school. They are working hard to do their best for the pupils in their school.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The instability in leadership has caused improvement to stutter since the start of this school year. This is particularly true for attendance and exclusions.

External support

The school has secured external support from Preston Teaching School Alliance. They are supporting leaders and teachers in improving the curriculum. Leaders have secured support from 'SOL attendance' to help to bring about improvements in pupils' attendance.

Leaders have also brokered the support of a school improvement partner, to help leaders in improving their skills further.