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Jacqueline Bowen
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Dear Miss Bowen

Special measures monitoring inspection of The East Manchester Academy

Following my visit with Alyson Middlemass, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), Rachel Goodwin (HMI), and David Woodhouse, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 22-23 June 2021, 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 most 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 December 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

Having considered 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 improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered 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 chief executive officer or equivalent of the Education and Leadership Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 22 June and 23 June 2021

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school's context since the additional monitoring inspection that took place in February 2021.

At the time of this inspection, pupils in Year 11 were not attending school. These pupils are working remotely for most of the time.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Senior leaders are sustaining high expectations in vital areas of the school such as safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and attendance. Leaders confidently ensure that systems and practices in these areas are suitably robust and making a difference. As a result, pupils' behaviour is improving, and they attend school more regularly than in the past. The systems for keeping pupils safe have strengthened further following the monitoring inspection in February 2021. Pupils and staff at The East Manchester Academy feel safer and happier than before.

Leaders are ambitious for the future and are clear about what they need to do next. This is because they have reviewed and strengthened school improvement plans. Improvement plans now provide suitable clarity about the actions that leaders will take and exactly what they intend to achieve. Leaders sensibly adapt and refine their plans. For example, it has not been possible for leaders to tackle some weaknesses because of the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Leaders' actions to improve behaviour are having a positive impact. Many types of behaviour, including bullying and the use of racist and homophobic language, have further decreased since the previous inspection. Most pupils now behave well around the school site. They understand leaders' expectations and willingly comply with them. High levels of staff supervision also contribute to this increasingly orderly environment. Pupils and staff engage much more positively with each other than in the past. Pupils and staff value the restorative approaches that support the new behaviour system.

There are still a minority of pupils who find it more difficult to regulate their behaviour. Some of these pupils demonstrate a lack of respect towards each other and to staff. Occasionally, this still includes the use of unacceptable language. In most cases, staff challenge and report such incidents of behaviour in line with the school's policy. When this happens, leaders make effective use of a wide range of strategies to positively influence pupils' behaviour. However, some staff do not follow the agreed procedures closely enough. This means that, from time to time, poor behaviour still goes on unchecked.

Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour in lessons is also still too variable. Though many pupils behave appropriately in lessons, a small number continue to disrupt the learning of others. The pandemic has hindered opportunities for leaders to meaningfully support teachers in managing pupils' behaviour.

Leaders' systems to improve attendance are robust and effective. More pupils are now attending school regularly. Leaders consider the attendance of individual pupils carefully. This ensures that they have a very detailed understanding of the reasons why some pupils are not attending well. They provide individualised support for these pupils and their families to reduce absence from school.

Pupils in Year 11 have been accessing education remotely since the beginning of June. Leaders have also provided occasional on-site activities to support pupils' next steps in education, employment or training.

Leaders are working to ensure that the curriculum is suitably broad, balanced and ambitious for all pupils. They have carefully audited subject plans to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This has shown that curriculum planning across different subjects is inconsistent in terms of quality and clarity. In many cases, plans do not identify the important knowledge and skills that pupils will learn. There is often no clear rationale for the order of units of work. Senior leaders have suitable plans in place to improve the curriculum. They have recently begun to work more intensively with subject leaders to help them strengthen the curriculum offer.

The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is gradually improving. Specialist staff are making better use of higher quality information about pupils' needs. Consequently, additional support for these pupils in English and mathematics is more focused than in the past. The SEND team provides helpful support for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. This helps those pupils who need brief respite from lessons to swiftly re-engage with learning in the classroom.

Leaders have recently set new expectations for staff to ensure that pupils with SEND are supported well during lessons. This is leading to some improvements in how staff work with these pupils. Despite this, the experience of pupils with SEND continues to be mixed. Staff appropriately assist these pupils with their organisational skills or their emotional needs. However, staff do not ensure that pupils with SEND get the subject-specific support that they need.

Leaders make effective use of information about pupils who speak English as an additional language. Staff understand how to support these pupils to learn a second language. They provide appropriate support for these pupils, including working with their families. Leaders are clear that there are weaknesses in the support for other pupils who need extra help, for example those pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. Leaders have clear and suitable plans to improve this important

aspect of pupils' education. However, the pandemic has impeded leaders in their efforts to improve pupils' reading abilities.

Teachers and support staff feel involved in the new improvements that leaders are implementing. Leaders support staff well with appropriate training and information about new developments. Staff feel well protected from poor or unacceptable behaviour. They said that despite the challenges of the pandemic, leaders have done everything that they could to support them with their workload and well-being.

Members of the interim management board (IMB) continue to make a significant contribution to leadership capacity at the school. They have a detailed understanding of the actions that leaders are taking and the impact that these actions are having. The IMB is equally well informed about which areas still need attention. Members consistently demonstrate appropriate attention to their statutory responsibilities. In partnership with the trust, they have appropriately begun to develop plans for a future substantive local governing body.

Priorities for further improvement:

- Ensure that staff are well equipped with an appropriate range of techniques to manage pupils' behaviour more effectively in the classroom.
- Ensure that pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read get the support that they need.

Additional support

The executive headteacher provides regular structured support and challenge for senior leaders. Leaders are using this to further strengthen the capacity of leadership. They are also using the significant expertise of the trust's curriculum leader to support them with their ongoing plans to improve the curriculum. Leaders are using SEND expertise from within and beyond the trust to add capacity to their work to improve the SEND provision in the school.

Pastoral leaders are benefiting from the partnership with a local school to strengthen the behaviour management systems in the school. The Ambition Institute is supporting a range of senior and middle leaders. Leaders are drawing on this support effectively to inform their ongoing improvements to the leadership of the curriculum.

Evidence

Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders to discuss the actions that leaders are taking towards the removal of special measures. They also spoke with the executive headteacher, trustees and members of the IMB. Inspectors

examined the trust's statement of action, leaders' plans for improvement and records of the meetings of the IMB.

Inspectors reviewed curriculum plans and spoke with subject leaders. They spoke with leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils who have additional needs. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They spoke with groups of teachers, support staff and pupils. They also scrutinised safeguarding, behaviour and attendance records.

Inspectors considered 82 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. They also took account of the 48 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 44 comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility.