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Tracy Foy
Principal
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Dear Mrs Foy

Special measures monitoring inspection of West Craven High School

Following my visit with Linda Emmett, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), Julie Bather, Ofsted Inspector (OI) and Liz Kelly, OI, to your school on 30 June and 1 July 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 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 of the school.

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 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 Pendle Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Emma Gregory
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 30 June and 1 July 2021

Context

The interim executive board that was already established at the time of the additional monitoring inspection in March 2021 is still in place. Staffing at the school has remained stable, including at senior leadership level. Those subject leaders who were new to their role at the time of the additional monitoring inspection remain in post. This includes subject leaders in English, mathematics and science.

Year 11 pupils left the school at the end of May 2021. At the time of this inspection, most pupils in Year 10 were self-isolating and learning from home. A number of staff were also self-isolating.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the most recent section 5 inspection, trustees have acted appropriately to strengthen the school's leadership at every level. The trust has also taken appropriate steps to stabilise and develop the senior leadership team. Senior leaders have established firm foundations on which they can build. This has given pupils, staff, parents and carers the confidence that the school is on the right trajectory of improvement.

With the support of the trust, senior leaders have correctly identified and prioritised the actions necessary to improve the school. For example, following the last section 5 inspection, senior leaders acted quickly to ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. At the most recent additional monitoring inspection, inspectors judged safeguarding to be effective. Staff understand the procedures they must follow if they have concerns about a pupil. During this inspection, pupils told inspectors that trusted adults in school will listen to them if they have any worries.

Senior leaders have ensured that leadership roles and lines of accountability are now clear, including those relating to the curriculum. These developments are helping leaders to secure improvements to the quality of education. For instance, leaders have taken positive steps to ensure that the curriculum is increasingly ambitious for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Within each subject, leaders have made appropriate changes to ensure that the curriculum is at least as broad as the national curriculum. For example, in English, pupils now study a wider range of texts in key stage 3 than they did previously. More recently, leaders have begun to address the barriers that prevent teachers from delivering the modern foreign languages curriculum effectively.

Subject leaders each have a broad overview of the curriculum outlining what pupils need to learn and when. These plans leave teachers in no doubt about the order in

which to deliver different topics. That said, within some subjects, more detailed curriculum planning remains in the early stages of development. Subject leaders are still in the process of identifying the most important content that they want pupils to know and remember. For example, in mathematics, leaders are deciding on crucial mathematical vocabulary, facts and methods that they want teachers to highlight and emphasise for pupils.

Senior leaders are determined to bring about further improvements to the quality of education. To this end, they are beginning to develop effective ways to check on how well teachers are delivering the curriculum. For example, in science, leaders check on how well teachers use assessment to check on pupils' learning. To support teachers to deliver curriculums better, senior leaders have ensured that staff receive appropriate training. This includes sessions to help teachers understand how to support pupils to develop an understanding of their own learning and to develop their literacy skills. However, due to the pandemic, some staff have not been able to benefit from subject-specific training to help them deliver some aspects of the planned curriculum effectively.

More recently, leaders have responded to inspectors' recommendation at the additional monitoring inspection around reading. A small group of well-trained staff now provide phonics support for those pupils who struggle the most with reading. Pupils also benefit from time to read during the school day. Staff across the school have used their recent training to support pupils' literacy skills more effectively. For example, pupils in Year 7 receive effective support to broaden their vocabulary and develop their comprehension skills.

Leaders have designed and introduced clear systems to help teachers to manage and deal with poor behaviour. Staff reported that these systems are easy to follow and help them to deal with any poor behaviour during lessons and around the school. Even so, some pupils expressed concerns about the behaviour of some of their peers in classrooms. For example, some pupils told inspectors that their lessons are often disrupted by others, preventing them from learning. These concerns were also shared by some parents. In addition, some pupils told inspectors that they were worried about the discriminatory language used by some of the pupils in school.

Leaders have strengthened the systems that staff use to check on and improve pupils' attendance. Staff have begun to take appropriate steps to encourage more pupils to attend school regularly. However, following the full reopening of school to all pupils in March 2021, some pupils continue to be absent from school too often.

Since the creation of the interim executive board, its members have maintained a close oversight of leaders' work. The members have the relevant knowledge and skills to carry out their roles effectively, providing an appropriate level of challenge and support to leaders. They hold senior leaders to account well. For example, the interim executive board has asked appropriate questions around leaders' work to

ensure that safeguarding is effective and that the curriculum is improving.

Following the departure of pupils in Year 11 at the end of May 2021, staff have continued to provide this group of pupils with additional support. For instance, Year 11 pupils have continued to receive advice and guidance to prepare them for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Senior leaders have gained the unwavering support of the staff, who are positive about leaders' actions to raise standards. Staff told inspectors that they are proud to work at the school and they consider senior leaders to be approachable, paying strong regard to their well-being and workload.

Additional support

The trust has ensured that suitable staffing appointments have been made and has provided a range of effective support, including taking appropriate action to strengthen governance, and senior and subject leadership.

Leaders value the additional help and guidance that they have received from a national leader of education. Subject leaders are particularly positive about how this support is helping them to develop and improve their curriculum plans.

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors met with the principal, the executive principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders, and teachers. The lead inspector met with three members of the interim executive board and the chief executive officer of the Pendle Education Trust. The lead inspector also met with two external advisers and spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors visited a range of lessons in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and history, and reviewed wider samples of pupils' work. Inspectors met with pupils from Years 7, 8 and 9 to talk about their work and other aspects of school life.

Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documents, including the leaders' improvement plan and subject leaders' curriculum plans. Inspectors analysed leaders' records in relation to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also considered 88 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 71 free-text comments, and 45 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.