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Kevin Green
Principal
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Dear Mr Green

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Manchester Health Academy

Following my visit with Zarina Connolly, Ofsted Inspector (OI), Osama Abdul Rahim, OI, and David Woodhouse, OI to your school on 14 and 15 July 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 was judged to have serious weaknesses in March 2020. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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 all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chair of the local governing body, 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

Alyson Middlemass
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 July 2021

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection, there has been a considerable number of changes to the senior leadership team. Six new assistant principals have been appointed. This includes an assistant principal with responsibility for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Several new teaching staff have joined the school. This includes five lead practitioners across a range of subjects, one curriculum leader, and three subject leaders.

The board of trustees has appointed a new chair of the local governing body (LGB) who began this role in April 2021. In addition, one further governor has also been appointed to the LGB.

Year 11 pupils left the school at the end of May 2021.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Following the most recent section 5 inspection, governors have taken effective steps to strengthen the school's senior leadership team. This has provided much needed stability for pupils and staff. It has also ensured that, collectively, senior leaders have the appropriate expertise to secure further improvements to the quality of education for pupils. Leaders have a suitable improvement plan in place. However, the success criteria identified to measure the impact of leaders' actions lack precision. Senior leaders, subject leaders and lead practitioners are beginning to raise the expectations that teachers have of pupils.

Governors are beginning to strengthen their oversight of leaders' work to improve the school. Recently, they have revised their approach to holding leaders to account. They have introduced appropriate systems to check on leaders' progress towards the key areas for improvement. Governors use the information that they glean from the new systems to ask more probing questions about the effectiveness of subject curriculums. That said, governors do not have a secure enough understanding of pupils' attendance or how well those pupils with SEND get the support that they need to access subject curriculums.

Senior leaders afford teachers several opportunities to benefit from curriculum development training. Leaders also provide time for teachers to work together with subject leaders. These actions are helping to ensure that teachers are suitably well informed about how to construct ambitious subject curriculums. Teachers now give greater consideration in their planning to the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn and the order in which concepts should be taught. This means that subject curriculum plans are increasingly well-thought-out. Now that curriculum plans are in place, leaders are beginning to instigate support for teachers so that they can

deliver these plans effectively. However, there remain weaknesses in how well teachers adapt these plans to meet the needs of those pupils with SEND.

In most subjects, teachers have developed subject-specific resources to support them to deliver the curriculum. Teachers use these materials to help pupils identify the most important vocabulary and knowledge that they must know and remember. Pupils told inspectors that they appreciate and value these resources. However, in some instances, these resources make it difficult for some pupils to fully demonstrate their understanding of the taught curriculum. This is particularly the case for those pupils with SEND. Leaders and teachers are not complacent. They regularly review and amend these subject resources so that they better meet pupils' needs.

Senior leaders have acted appropriately to overhaul the processes that teachers use to check on how well pupils are learning the curriculum. Leaders are beginning to make better use of the information that they obtain from these checks to amend curriculum plans. That said, there remain some differences in how effectively teachers use assessment during learning to address pupils' misconceptions and overcome pupils' missing knowledge. This means that some pupils do not learn the curriculum in the way that leaders intend.

Senior leaders and governors have secured improvements to the leadership of SEND with the appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator. This has led to greater precision in identifying the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders have also started to improve the quality of information available to teachers about this group of pupils.

Leaders continue to prioritise their strategy to support pupils with reading. They have plans in place to improve staff's effectiveness in identifying weaknesses in pupils' phonics knowledge and reading. Leaders have strengthened staff's expertise in phonics with the appointment of new staff. Teachers recognise the importance of improving pupils' knowledge of vocabulary. To this end, leaders plan to train more teachers in vocabulary development and phonics teaching. Pupils continue to benefit from leaders' strategies to encourage a love of reading across the school.

Leaders have worked well to improve pupils' rates of attendance. Through the appointment of additional attendance officers, leaders have strengthened the attendance team. This is starting to have a positive impact on the proportion of pupils who attend school regularly. While there are several success stories for individual pupils, too many others do not attend school as often as they should. This is particularly the case for pupils with SEND. This has been exacerbated by the issues caused by COVID-19.

Since Year 11 left the school at the end of May 2021, staff have continued to provide this group of pupils with online study materials and other resources. This

has helped to prepare and support pupils in Year 11 for the next stage of their education, employment, or training.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They are positive about the opportunities that leaders provide for their professional development. Most staff feel that leaders have put in place appropriate measures to help staff to manage their workload effectively. Most staff feel that leaders support them well.

Additional support

Senior leaders value the support they have received from a new school improvement adviser provided by the local authority. Subject leaders are highly positive about how this support is helping them to develop and improve the design and order of subject curriculum plans.

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors met with the principal, other senior leaders, teachers, and members of the support staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the LGB. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.

Inspectors visited a range of lessons in English, art, ethics, geography, history, photography, science and Spanish. Inspectors reviewed wider samples of pupils' work and met with pupils from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 to talk about their learning and other aspects of school life.

Inspectors considered a variety of documentation, including leaders' improvement plans, subject leaders' curriculum plans and other documentation relating to the curriculum. Inspectors analysed leaders' records linked to safeguarding and attendance. Inspectors considered the 72 responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including the 70 comments submitted via the free-text facility. Inspectors also reviewed the 56 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.