

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Damian Carlier
Acting Headteacher
Lea Manor High School Performing Arts College
Northwell Drive
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU3 3TL

Dear Mr Carlier

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lea Manor High School Performing Arts College

Following my visit with Anthony Bishop, Ofsted Inspector (OI), to your school on 8 and 9 March 2022, 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 July 2021. 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 pandemic began. We discussed the ongoing 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:

The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Damian Loneragan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 March 2022

Context

Since the previous inspection report in July 2021, there have been significant changes in the school's leadership. An interim executive board (IEB) took over the governance of the school in January 2022. An acting headteacher has been leading the school while the headteacher is absent.

From January 2022, a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has been in place. A local trust is supporting the school and SENCo with additional leadership capacity. There is a new designated safeguarding lead. The safeguarding team is now much bigger than it was. Working with the IEB, the local authority has appointed an additional senior leader to support with safeguarding. Across the school, leadership roles and responsibilities have been reorganised and reprioritised.

During this monitoring visit, inspectors focused on leaders' actions to improve safeguarding procedures and processes. Inspectors also considered the recent steps to improve and build an appropriate curriculum for all pupils.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

The previous inspection report in July 2021 highlighted significant weakness across the school, particularly with regards to safeguarding pupils from harm. Since then, leaders have addressed the issues and gaps in safeguarding systems and processes. The work to improve the systems have recently accelerated. Safeguarding is now effective.

Leaders have increased the capacity of the safeguarding team. The team is now much larger than it was before. Every member of the team has a clear understanding of their role to ensure pupils are kept safe. Leaders now have relevant and up-to-date training. Safeguarding records have improved. Records are more detailed than they once were. They show appropriate referrals to other agencies. The school has increased its partnership with other external agencies so pupils can now get the help that they need.

Teachers have recent and appropriate training to help them spot if a pupil is at risk of harm, particularly as a result of peer-on-peer abuse. Staff know that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. Before, teachers did not hear back once they referred a pupil. Teachers now say that the safeguarding team are communicating more effectively with them about their referrals so that they can be assured pupils are getting the right support.

The school has developed a wider range of 'early help' for pupils who are vulnerable. There are more places for pupils to go to within the school. There is a growing sense that pupils are being listened to. Many pupils are more confident that staff will take their concerns seriously.

Many pupils feel that leaders are dealing with bullying or prejudicial behaviour much better than they did before. Leaders have a firmer grip on the patterns of bullying and poor behaviour, and where it occurs. They adjust the 'family learning time' to discuss issues that occur. More pupils report incidents now. A small number of pupils, however, still feel that leaders could act more quickly, particularly with regard to bullying. They are not yet convinced that the new processes are working.

Leaders have developed a more positive approach to dealing with behaviour. The new behaviour system is very recent and beginning to have an impact. There is an improved consistency in how teachers deal with behaviour. Pupils feel that behaviour is getting better and expectations of them are rising, particularly since the 'reset' in February 2022. Inspectors noted calm behaviour around the school. However, pupils' views and behaviour data show that this is not always the case. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers deal with poor behaviour consistently and fairly, otherwise this will undermine the progress the school has made.

While faith in the school leadership is growing, a small number of pupils and their parents do not have full confidence in the new leadership team. They have seen a lot of change, with much of it recent. Leaders have not proved to everyone that their work to improve safeguarding and behaviour is making a difference. Leaders need to work even more closely with pupils and parents to assure them that their concerns are being addressed.

Staff, across the school, want the school to be better than it is. They recognise that many changes were needed and this has resulted in an increased workload. Staff surveys show that leaders support staff to manage their workload while they get to grips with new systems and processes.

Leaders' first priorities were to improve pupils' safety and behaviour. They are now turning their attention to improving the quality of education pupils receive. This work is not as far advanced as the work on safeguarding and behaviour. Leaders have reviewed the school's curriculum plans. They have identified clear areas where the curriculum is not as ambitious as it should be. They are working in partnership with staff to build new curriculum plans. These are not yet ready. Some staff now use more effective approaches to teaching the curriculum than in the past. However, this is still too inconsistent. Leaders now identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) more accurately, but teachers are not aware of the strategies they need to use to support these pupils.

The increased capacity in the school has enabled leaders to evaluate the school's provision for pupils with SEND and other pupils who may be vulnerable. Leaders use the new 'pupil inclusion panel' to discuss the needs of pupils and to check on the care and support they are getting.

Much of the school's improved work is new. It still depends heavily on the support offered by the IEB. Members of the IEB recognise their responsibility in ensuring the school continues to improve. Their statement of action, coupled with school leaders' plans,

shows clearly how they will do this. The IEB is working with leaders to ensure they have the capacity to maintain and improve the school without additional support in the future.

Additional support

The local authority has worked quickly to support the school on its journey of improvement. The IEB and other support partners are working closely with the school to add capacity and provide effective challenge at appropriate times. Plans for the future show how the IEB will add additional capacity to further strengthen the school's leadership.

Evidence

The inspectors scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, other senior leaders, staff and members of the IEB and of the local authority. Across both days, inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from all year groups and met them in both mixed and single gender groups. The inspectors visited lessons across a range of subjects. They observed the school at the beginning of the school day and during break and lunchtimes.

The inspectors scrutinised leaders' action plans and the local authority's statement of action. They reviewed safeguarding, behaviour and attendance systems and processes. The lead inspector spoke to the local authority's safeguarding lead.

The inspectors observed and spoke to pupils in lessons and around the school. The lead inspector considered the 34 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. He considered the 54 responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey, including the 42 free-text responses.