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28 April 2022

Anita Kaur Notta
Executive Principal (interim)
Khalsa Secondary Academy
Hollybush Hill
Slough
Buckinghamshire
SL2 4QB

Dear Mrs Notta

Special measures monitoring inspection of Khalsa Secondary Academy

Following my visit with Shaun Jarvis, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 15 and 16 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 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 had 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

Having considered the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Aimee Floyd
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 March 2022

Context

The school was judged to require special measures in December 2019. This is the first official on-site monitoring inspection. Two other additional monitoring visits took place in November 2020 and March 2021 respectively. The first of these was carried out remotely because of COVID-19 restrictions.

There have been several changes in the senior leadership of the school since the most recent section 5 inspection. Further changes have also taken place in the multi-academy trust, including the appointment of new trustees. Since the additional monitoring inspection in March 2021, the headteacher has left the school. Currently, the school is being led by an interim executive principal, who also leads another school within the multi-academy trust. There is also an interim chief executive officer providing further support and guidance.

There is a planned transfer of the school to another multi-academy trust, but at the time of the inspection, a transfer date had not been finalised. Leaders, staff and stakeholders outlined their hopes that these matters would be resolved quickly.

The inspection focused on the areas for improvement that were identified in the inspection report of December 2019, as well as the additional priority outlined in the report of March 2021. Inspectors also considered the quality of education that the school provides.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

The interim senior leaders have continued to oversee improvements across the school. They are ambitious for their pupils and the school's community. This is evidenced by the much-needed changes within the curriculum, as well as many personal development opportunities that have been offered to pupils throughout this academic year. However, the uncertainty around the school's transfer has meant that leaders have not always been able to implement all their intended initiatives. Their work has also been hampered by the departure of key staff.

Since early 2020, there has been a focus on redeveloping the school's curriculum. This is now broad and balanced, with pupils in key stage 3 following the national curriculum. In some subjects, such as science and history, there is a thoughtful, sequenced curriculum being implemented from Years 7 to 11. Staff take time to check what pupils have learned to identify any gaps in their knowledge. For example, in science, regular assessments are used to discover what information pupils need to relearn during 'reteach weeks'. Unfortunately, the pace of improvement has not been consistent. The impact of COVID-19, as well as some staff departures, have meant that staff have not been able to fully implement their plans. Leaders have a clear awareness of which subjects need greater support and are keen to ensure that this is put in place.

Improvements can also be seen in the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The identification of needs is now much clearer. Staff are provided with detailed learning plans that outline clearly what support pupils should be given to help them access their learning. Regular training has meant that staff have a much greater understanding of the different needs of pupils with SEND. There is also ongoing work to develop the support for pupils who find reading more difficult. This includes specific support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. However, during the inspection, some parents and carers expressed their concerns about staff departures and the disruption to the provision for their children with SEND. Leaders are very aware of how unsettling this has been. When needed, other staff from within the multi-academy trust provide specialised knowledge and expertise, which helps staff meet the needs of pupils. This includes individualised advice to support the complex needs of pupils with education, health and care plans.

Changes have also been made to the governance structures in the school and the multi-academy trust. There is now a much greater level of scrutiny provided by a supportive and dedicated board of trustees and local advisory board (LAB). The interim senior leaders work closely with trustees to create and assess appropriate school improvement plans. These have been adapted regularly over the past academic year in the light of any decisions being made about the school's future. These plans are appropriate and continue to focus on the areas of concern highlighted in the 2019 report. They are also a useful tool for trustees as they evaluate the impact of school improvement.

While there is evidence of advances in many areas of the school, safeguarding is still not effective. In the report from the additional monitoring inspection in March 2021, several improvements to safeguarding practices were identified. These have been maintained over the past year. Staff appreciate the training provided that has helped them recognise signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Detailed record-keeping indicates how these concerns are reported and followed up. Referrals are then made swiftly to external agencies when required. Pupils are also very positive about the personal, social and health education curriculum that is delivered in tutor time and through the 'learning for life' lessons. They feel that this has given them a greater understanding of potential risks to their safety. Pupils particularly value how these sessions have provided them with time to talk about their own mental well-being.

However, despite this work, serious concerns continue to be raised by parents, pupils and staff as to whether all pupils feel safe at the school. These were expressed both directly to inspectors and through the anonymous Ofsted surveys. Concerns indicate that some pupils do not always feel that their worries are listened to. Some pupils are therefore not confident to report their worries, as they do not believe that they will get the help that they need. In addition, leaders are still not following the statutory guidance when a concern is raised about the behaviour of a member of staff. A process is in place, but this is not being consistently followed. Leaders are not taking the necessary actions to ensure that a thorough and comprehensive culture of safeguarding is in place.

During the inspection, concerns were also raised by some staff about their workload and well-being. Morale is currently very low. The uncertainty around the transfer of the school has contributed to this. Through Ofsted's anonymous staff survey, many staff outlined the difficulties of the past year and the consequent negative impact on their well-being. The departure of staff, as well as staff absence because of COVID-19, have further exacerbated this position. Staff are eager for this period of disruption to end so they can focus fully on helping their pupils to learn and achieve.

Additional support

The assistance offered by the Khalsa Academies Trust has supported school staff in improving the school's curriculum. Staff have benefited from working collaboratively with other, specialist teachers from schools within the trust. This has led to the redesign and development of the curriculum at both key stage 3 and key stage 4. Greater scrutiny is also provided by the board of trustees, which continues to support leaders with school improvement. Most recently, the trust has also provided the interim senior leadership team with senior leaders from a school within the trust. This has provided much-needed support for the school as plans for its future are finalised.

Evidence

Inspectors held meetings with the interim senior leaders and interim chief executive officer, other school leaders, trustees and a representative from the LAB. Discussions also took place with pupils and staff. An inspector also spoke to Buckinghamshire's local authority designated officer on the telephone.

Inspectors observed the school's work, checked the single central record and scrutinised a range of documents relating to the curriculum and to safeguarding. Inspectors considered the 39 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and the 29 responses to the confidential staff survey.