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Mark Taylor
Interim Principal
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Dear Mr Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of East London Science School

Following my visit with Bob Hamlyn, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and Joanna Jones, Ofsted Inspector (OI), to your school on 29 and 30 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 June 2021. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the second 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 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, and the interim chief executive officer of the East London Science School Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Newham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Bruce
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 29 and 30 March 2022

Context

Since the previous inspection in June 2021, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team in the school. The previous principal has now left. The vice principal has been promoted to the role of interim principal. The previous business manager has left. An interim chief executive officer (CEO) and an interim chief financial officer (CFO) now fully support the senior team. Two vice principals have left their roles. The interim principal has built a new senior team. Five assistant principals are confirmed in role. Members of the senior leadership team have newly confirmed roles and responsibilities. The special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator is now a member of the senior leadership team. The safeguarding team has been expanded. There are now 15 members of staff in the safeguarding team. The leader with responsibility for safeguarding is now supported by three deputy leaders with safeguarding responsibilities.

There have been a number of changes to middle leadership. Four new subject leaders have been appointed and three new heads of year. A special educational needs manager now supports the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator. Other new appointments include head of careers provision, leader of personal development, pupil welfare officer and attendance officer. Leaders have strengthened existing leadership structures by appointing a deputy head of sixth form and deputy head of Year 10 and Year 11. The majority of appointments were made among staff already working at the school. Over recent times, staff absence has been high. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a factor in this. Leaders have sought to recruit permanent staff.

Inspectors and leaders agreed that the inspection should focus on safeguarding, behaviour and bullying and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Leaders' work to improve the school is starting to have a positive impact on behaviour management. There are now clear systems and policies in place to manage and improve behaviour. As a result of implementing new behavioural sanctions, exclusions are currently high. Leaders are now recording and tracking behaviour incidents accurately. These records help governors to hold leaders to account. However, some staff do not routinely follow the school's approaches and policies. Leaders need to continue their work to train staff so that all staff understand how to manage behaviour effectively and apply behaviour sanctions when necessary. Staff who are new to teaching feel more supported with behaviour from leaders compared to when they first joined the school. However, there is some variability in the support given to early career teachers between the school's three sites.

Leaders' supervision encourages pupils to return to classrooms swiftly after lunch and breaktime to ensure that learning in lessons can start promptly. Learning in lessons in

Years 10 and 11 is calmer than previously. Teachers encourage pupils to follow the school's behaviour routines in class. In Years 7 to 9, behaviour in lessons is uneven. In some lessons, low-level disruption goes unchallenged by teachers.

Pupils typically said that behaviour in class has improved since the last inspection. Behaviour record cards help pupils to recognise whether they are on or off task. However, pupils felt that accepted standards of behaviour have been lower where staff absence has been high.

Leaders have reviewed the school's record-keeping and response to incidents of bullying. Most pupils agreed that bullying incidents are taken more seriously by staff. However, some pupils felt that staff could do more to resolve bullying and get it to stop. The school's work to address bullying and how staff deal with it is ongoing. Some pupils reported that there were incidents of name-calling and language used unkindly. Through recording and analysing these incidents, leaders have started to consider how this behaviour can be addressed through the curriculum.

Since the previous inspection, leaders commissioned an external review of safeguarding and sought external ongoing help for safeguarding. They have strengthened the safeguarding team. There is now a leader with responsibility for safeguarding and a deputy leader in charge of safeguarding across each site of the school. Appropriate pre-appointment checks have been made for governors and school leaders. The safeguarding policy meets statutory requirements and includes information about local contextual safeguarding issues. Staff have received up-to-date safeguarding training. Leaders now work with external partners to deliver training. They keep careful registers of safeguarding training. Staff know how to identify any pupils who may be vulnerable or need early help. Leaders keep detailed records of all referrals and interventions.

Leaders have planned and put in a place a curriculum that teaches pupils to keep themselves safe. All pupils, including students in the sixth form, are taught about important issues including online safety, the importance of consent and how to recognise sexual harassment. The statutory requirements of the relationships and sex education curriculum are met. External speakers have supported the development of this work. Pupils value the chance to talk about topical issues in lessons. However, staff need further training on how to deliver sensitive topics for this work to be fully effective and embedded. This training need has been recognised by leaders in the school's development plan.

Leaders have conducted risk assessments across all three sites of the school. These identified potential safeguarding risks and how to mitigate them. Pupils have received guidance to help them to manage these risks safely. For example, a recent assembly provided pupils with guidance on canal water safety to help pupils stay safe next to the water. Leaders and staff are present around the school at break and lunchtime and help to supervise pupils during breaktime outside. All this helps to manage the site risks detailed in the risk assessments. However, pupils are not as routinely well supervised when they leave school at the end of the school day.

Leaders have ensured that pupils now have lessons in religious education. Pupils described learning about other faiths and religions.

Leaders have strengthened the leadership team to support pupils with SEND. They now have clear oversight of the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders know the pupils with SEND and have shared this with staff. Leaders are currently prioritising meeting the statutory needs of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They are working with parents and external agencies to make sure that this support is in place and reviewed appropriately. Leaders have engaged the help of external support to check that pupils get the help that they need to take public examinations. While leaders have shared detailed information with teachers to support some pupils with SEND, this is not the case for all pupils. Leaders have focused on the needs of pupils with a EHC plan. As a result, teachers are not as fully informed about the needs of other pupils with SEND. Their needs are not planned for across the curriculum. Methods used to correctly identify pupils with SEND are inconsistent. Systems of identification are not routinely strong, and training and support for staff is not yet up to date.

Leaders have reduced the number of internal examinations that pupils take. They are now assessed formally once a term. This has increased the time given to teaching the curriculum. Teachers said that this change has helped to reduce their workload.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have attempted to increase communication with parents. They have set up a number of different methods to keep parents informed about the school. These include letters, newsletters, face-to-face meetings and online information sessions. Some parents expressed their appreciation for the efforts that leaders are making to communicate with them. Leaders know that it will take time to regain the trust and confidence of other parents.

Governors hold leaders to account. Written records of governors' meetings show that they challenge leaders appropriately over improvements identified in the statement of action.

Additional support

The interim principal quickly sought external support for the school. The interim CEO provides directed guidance on leadership. This support has proved valuable. The interim CFO has provided effective financial support for the school. Leaders have commissioned external support for safeguarding. Leaders responsible for safeguarding have found this support helpful. External support has helped governors to hold leaders to account effectively and to quality assure systems and practices in the school.

Evidence

The inspectors met with the interim CEO, the interim principal, the leader responsible for safeguarding, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator and other senior leaders, including the chair of the local governing body. Inspectors held meetings with groups of teaching staff.

Inspectors met with groups of pupils to listen to their views on the school. Inspectors visited classes across a range of year groups to observe behaviour in lessons. They observed behaviour at break and lunchtime and visited the internal exclusion room. Inspectors considered information provided by the school regarding behaviour and attendance.

Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's statement of action, improvement plans, written records of the governing board meetings, external reviews commissioned by leaders and action plans for safeguarding. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, including pre-appointment checks for staff.

Inspectors considered responses to the online Ofsted Parent View survey, including free-text comments, as well as responses to separate online staff and pupil questionnaires.