

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



15 January 2023

James Johnstone  
Acting Headteacher  
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School  
Glen Road  
Waterfoot  
Rossendale  
Lancashire  
BB4 7BJ

Dear Mr Johnstone

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 12 and 13 January 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in June 2022.

During the inspection, Charlotte Oles, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI), Kevin Sexton, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body, the chief executive officer of Endeavour Learning Trust and a representative of the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also met with groups of pupils from Years 7 to 11 and students in the sixth form. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including leaders' improvement plans, safeguarding records, the programme for personal development and the minutes of governing body meetings. I have considered all of this in coming to my judgement.

**Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.**

**I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.**

The school should take further action to:

- secure strong leadership of the sixth form to ensure that students benefit from learning a high-quality programme of personal development in sufficient depth
- ensure that staff across all subject areas are fully equipped to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to learn well inside and outside of the classroom.

### **The progress made towards the removal of special measures**

Governors have acted decisively to address the deep-rooted culture in the school community that was contributing to the misogynistic environment identified by pupils. To do this, they have overhauled the school's leadership to enable many new initiatives to be actioned quickly. As a result, since the previous inspection, you have taken up the position of acting headteacher. The senior leadership team has been considerably strengthened, including through external appointments. For example, two new deputy headteachers have taken up post. A new designated safeguarding lead (DSL), and a new chair of governors, have been appointed. New pastoral leaders are also in place to support pupils' welfare.

Together with senior leaders and governors, you have accepted the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. You have taken swift, effective and strategic action to put in place appropriate and sustainable systems. This is ensuring a strong trajectory of improvement in pupils' behaviour, personal development and safeguarding arrangements. For example, you have ensured that all staff fully understand their wider role as a teacher. This includes staff's understanding of their professional responsibility to safeguard pupils and to promote their well-being. You and other leaders are now regularly conducting learning walks to ensure that your vision for the safety and welfare of pupils is reflected in every classroom and around the school site. While some changes are in their infancy, many staff recognise, and appreciate, the already positive impact that they are having on improving the school. Notwithstanding, you accept that some staff remain on the journey of fully understanding the new direction and vision for the school.

You have made safeguarding your top priority. You have worked closely with safeguarding leaders, both in the local authority and the supporting multi-academy trust. This collaboration has enabled you to thoroughly review and improve the safeguarding arrangements at the school. You have employed a new, non-teaching DSL who brings a wealth of experience to the role. In a short space of time, the DSL has successfully helped you to rethink systems and procedures for keeping pupils safe. The profile of safeguarding has been raised across the school, including in the sixth form. Staff have been well trained to identify and act on harmful sexual behaviours. You have also ensured that staff are clear about the procedures they must follow to report any concerns about a pupil's welfare. This has led to increased clarity and confidence among staff. You and senior leaders recognise that the new, streamlined safeguarding procedures are beginning to enable you to strategically respond to patterns and trends across the school.

Added to this, you have introduced a range of mechanisms for pupils, and students in the sixth form, to be able to report their concerns about safeguarding and discriminatory behaviours, including through anonymised online portals. This is supported by the considerable investment in and increased capacity of the pastoral team. For example, each year group now has a designated pastoral leader based in the newly centralised pastoral hub. As the pastoral and safeguarding team is now based in one location, pupils and students can access support at any time of the day. They value this change.

You were clear that rebuilding the trust between pupils and staff is of paramount importance. You have been judicious in your approaches to tackling the concerns that pupils and students raised during the previous inspection. For example, you quickly ascertained where pupils do not feel safe around the school. To remedy these concerns, you have increased staff supervision in areas where pupils told you that they felt vulnerable. You have also organised the school into zones for each year group so that there is adequate staff supervision during social times. While it is fair to say that some older pupils do not like the tightening of some school rules, these pupils fully understand the reasons behind leaders' actions. As a result, you are beginning to gain the trust and confidence of pupils.

To keep pupils informed of your actions, you are using assemblies to communicate with clarity the changes that you have made through the 'you said, we did' model. As a consequence of the swift action that leaders have taken to remedy the weaknesses in safeguarding, all pupils and students spoken with said that they feel safe. Without hesitation, pupils and students told inspectors that they know who to go to if they have any concerns or worries. Pupils and students are confident that staff will listen to them.

Now outwardly facing, you and other leaders are working more effectively with external agencies than previously. You have enhanced your systems to communicate pupils' needs to staff. For example, leaders have refined and relaunched risk registers to ensure that staff know which pupils and students require additional help. The new DSL, supported by the newly formed pastoral team, is tenacious in ensuring that these pupils get timely and appropriate support. Safeguarding and pastoral leaders are continually improving their practice. While safeguarding is now effective, you are acutely aware that there is more to be done to address safeguarding concerns through the curriculum.

You, along with other leaders, have strengthened the behaviour policy to ensure that there is a zero-tolerance approach to any behaviours that contradict the protected characteristics contained in the Equality Act 2010. This includes same-sex relationships. Staff have had comprehensive training to support them to apply the behaviour policy with more consistency and equity. This has included training in adverse childhood experiences and trauma-informed practice. The new behaviour policy and accompanying systems are enabling a much more forensic approach to improving behaviour for learning, as well as behaviour at social times.

You are rapidly unravelling the toxic culture of intolerance to difference that was identified

at the last inspection. You are educating pupils about tolerance and respect for all. For example, you are focusing on increased support for ethnic minority groups. You are also helping pupils to understand and accept different religions, societies and values. Consequently, pupils are more comfortable in reporting inappropriate behaviours, including potentially harmful sexual behaviours. As a result, there has been a spike in the number of pupils who have received suspensions.

Pupils and students of all ages have noticed tangible differences in the behaviour of others. They described in detail how they are taught about respect. Pupils and students who shared their views explained that incidents of bullying, and other forms of discriminatory behaviour, continue to reduce. Pupils and students said that it is now fine to be different at this school. On this inspection, pupils and students spoken with did not report any racist or prejudicial behaviour. Nor did they express any considerable concerns about how leaders address harmful sexual behaviours. Nonetheless, some pupils were adamant that some older boys continue to make sexist and misogynistic comments towards others when staff are out of earshot. Leaders are aware that changing hearts and minds within the whole-school community, including those of staff, parents and carers, requires more time.

You are in the process of rolling out a comprehensive personal development programme to address the gaps in pupils' knowledge in relation to equality and relationships and sex education. A group of staff have been trained to deliver this programme well. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are valuing these lessons. Moreover, you have introduced a student council and well-being ambassadors in each year group and ensured that the structured form time programme teaches pupils about citizenship and British values. This is helping to galvanise the school community.

In the sixth form, there is an array of opportunities for students to broaden their academic education. Students in the sixth form were positive about the pastoral and well-being support available to them. Nevertheless, wider improvements to the personal development programme in the sixth form are lagging behind the rest of the school. This is because leadership across the sixth form is fragile.

While not the prime focus of this inspection, you have also recognised the need to develop the quality of education further. This is because you understand the inextricable link between strong academic outcomes and pupils' and students' safety and emotional well-being. For example, leaders are focusing on developing adaptive teaching and ensuring that the right structures are in place to support pupils with SEND effectively. This is because you recognise that pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should. Some teachers do not use the information that they have to adapt the delivery of the curriculum and the personal development programme successfully to help pupils with SEND to build their knowledge.

Reading is a high priority. Following the return to school after the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have identified the need to ascertain any gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. Pupils from Years 7 to 11 who need support are helped to catch up quickly. There has been a

whole-school focus on developing vocabulary, including in the sixth form, as part of improving pupils' oracy skills and self-esteem. Leaders have raised the profile of the love of reading. You are in the process of training staff so that they can confidently model reading to pupils.

You have embraced the support and expertise provided by the Endeavour Learning Trust and used this wisely to accelerate the pace of improvement. Part of your success to date has been the honesty and transparency of you and the wider leadership team, coupled with your willingness to listen and act upon advice.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Goodwin  
**His Majesty's Inspector**