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Joanna Crewe
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Dear Mrs Crewe

Special measures monitoring inspection of Chaucer School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 2 and 3 March 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, Tim Scargill-Knight, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the director of secondary education of the multi-academy trust, other staff, trustees, governors and representatives from 'Learn Sheffield' 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. We also visited lessons, held meetings with support staff and considered the responses to Ofsted surveys for staff and parents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Chaucer 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 am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that strategies to improve pupils' attendance are sustained and effective in all year groups.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the school's leadership. You have restructured the senior leadership team and have appointed two new deputy headteachers. In addition, the appointment of two new assistant headteachers to roles that link to specific areas for improvement has also added to the capacity of the senior leadership team. You have appointed four new subject leaders in art and technology, physical education, performing arts and modern foreign languages. During this inspection, we focused on behaviour and attitudes, leadership and management, and personal development. At the last inspection, in June 2022, these judgement areas were deemed to be inadequate. We also gathered evidence that links to the quality of education.

With the support of the trust, you concentrated your initial efforts on leadership capacity. This has quickly enabled leaders to dedicate time, effort and energy to the identified areas for improvement. Staff and pupils are positive about the changes and the improved clarity in communication from the senior leadership team. Leaders have been supported and assisted in decision-making and the implementation of changes by leaders within the trust, from local schools and different academy trusts. The outward-looking approach you have encouraged, and insisted leaders adopt, is starting to reap benefits. Examples of this can be seen in the confidence and alignment of staff to the changes in how behaviour is managed.

The new approach to managing pupil behaviour is having a positive effect in the classrooms. Pupils are calmer and more respectful in lessons. The focus from staff on positive behaviour and rewarding attitudes that demonstrate the three important values of the school, 'Respect, Responsibility and Kindness', are central to the changes made. Behaviour out of class is poor. There is too much physical contact and lack of self-control during movement between classes, at breaktime and at lunchtime. You, leaders, staff and pupils all agree that this should be the next priority moving forward. Pupils now only have access to specific areas of school at these times. This is starting to help staff to support pupils in managing their own behaviour. The full impact of the changes in terms of incidents and a reduction in suspensions is not evident at this time.

You have recently assigned a new member of the senior leadership team to strengthen the work done with pupils and families to improve attendance. There are still too many pupils missing school for both short and extended periods. Meeting families in the community is a new initiative that has been introduced by leaders. This is helping to improve communication with families and address behaviour and attendance issues. Leaders and staff have a continued focus on strengthening relations and raising expectations to a higher level.

Leaders have started to improve the personal development offer. This has included an increase in the time allocated to the subject each week. At the same time, leaders have revised their curriculum planning and have collaborated with external agencies to strengthen the quality of the content covered in each year group. The wider curriculum offer is gradually improving, with more clubs, activities and educational visits on offer.

While some opportunities are restricted to certain pupils, you and leaders are developing ways to make the offers more universally available to all pupils. Pupils have an understanding of different values and beliefs, but this is not yet secure.

The local governing body has welcomed two new members since the last inspection. They have received training to allow them to fulfil their role effectively. The chair of the governing body has a strong commitment to the school and is part of the core improvement group. This group meets monthly and provides additional challenge and support for leaders in relation to areas for improvement. Governors have undertaken external training to develop their knowledge in important areas. The changes to members of the governing body allowed you the opportunity to review all roles and refine them so that they are linked to improvement areas identified at the last inspection. Governors meet with staff who are leading on important areas and make regular visits to the school. Trustees have supported the changes you have made and they work with leaders to monitor the progress in relation to priorities.

Leaders are supporting staff and, when new ways of working are introduced, linked training is planned. Staff feel valued and appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues across the trust. External coaching, support and training are also being used effectively. You have listened to the views of staff, parents and pupils to understand and address concerns as they have arisen.

Pupils' GCSE examination outcomes in 2022 were weak. You have made sure that leaders have not neglected areas for development in the curriculum. Senior leaders are systematically reviewing and developing all curriculum areas. This work is progressing but is still at an early stage.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Training is well planned and delivered throughout the year. A team of knowledgeable staff is in place to provide pastoral care. Pupils say that they feel the school is improving. However, they did indicate that at times the use of inappropriate and derogatory language is frequent.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the Tapton School Academy Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Jones
His Majesty's Inspector