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11 July 2023

Chris Keen
Executive Principal
The Bulwell Academy
Hucknall Lane
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Dear Mr Keen

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Bulwell Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 7 and 8 June 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 October 2022.

During the inspection, Sue Wood, Farhan Adam, Alison Davies, Ofsted Inspectors (OI), and I discussed with you, the principal, the director of education of the multi-academy trust, the chair of the board of trustees, representatives of the academy improvement board and other senior leaders, 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, looked at pupils' work, met with pupils, met with teachers and scrutinised documents relating to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). We considered the views of staff and parents through the Ofsted surveys. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

The Bulwell Academy 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 progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection, the trust has made significant changes to the leadership of the school. The trust appointed you as executive principal in November 2022. It appointed a new principal in June 2023. The trust appointed a new assistant principal to the role of designated safeguarding leader (DSL) in January 2023. The DSL has worked with the director of safeguarding from the trust to put together a team with responsibility for the oversight of safeguarding. The trust's director of SEND has supported the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) to strengthen provision for pupils with SEND. The trust has appointed two new members of staff to support an assistant principal with responsibility for improving attendance. Senior leaders have established areas of responsibility. Leaders closed The Hub, which was a provision for pupils with SEND. They have trained learning support assistants to support pupils in mainstream classrooms. Leaders have decided to close the sixth form from September 2023.

The curriculum for pupils with SEND is now more ambitious. Pupils with SEND take part in all the same lessons as other pupils. Leaders have reassessed the needs of all pupils. They have planned teaching strategies to help pupils with SEND to access the curriculum in full. Teachers know which pupils need extra support. Leaders have provided training for teachers and other members of staff to make sure that they know how to adapt lessons for pupils with SEND effectively. Most teachers provide the necessary support for pupils with SEND. Leaders know that they need to continue to provide training to staff to make sure that this happens consistently well.

In some lessons, teachers ask good questions to identify what pupils know. They make sure that pupils learn the right knowledge at the right time. In other lessons, teachers do not accurately identify what pupils have learned. This means that they do not adapt their teaching to meet pupils' learning needs. Leaders have thought carefully about how teachers should check pupils' understanding in lessons. They have begun to provide training to make sure that all teachers routinely check what pupils know. However, in lessons, teachers do not yet make these checks consistently well.

Reading is a priority in the curriculum. All pupils in key stage 3 now have a weekly reading lesson. Sometimes, these lessons do not help pupils improve their reading as well as they might. Leaders know this and have plans to work with teachers to develop reading lessons. Leaders have chosen texts for pupils to read that are interesting and match their stage of reading. Subject leaders have plans to support weaker readers in all subjects. Teachers know what stage of reading pupils are at. They use this information to support pupils in lessons. Leaders have assessed all pupils to establish what knowledge they already have. They now provide high-quality support for the weakest readers. This has helped some pupils to improve quickly.

Leaders have changed the way that they support pupils that do not behave well in lessons. Teachers encourage pupils positively to correct poor behaviour so that they do not disrupt learning. Leaders provide extra support for vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND when they struggle to regulate their behaviour. The number of pupils removed from

lessons has fallen. Pupils now return to lessons more quickly so that they do not miss too much learning.

Attendance has started to improve. Fewer pupils, including pupils with SEND, are persistently absent from school. Leaders have implemented systems to manage and improve pupils' attendance. They have set ambitious targets for pupil attendance. Leaders have made appropriate checks on alternative providers. They monitor the attendance of pupils that attend off-site provision. They have made sure that these pupils are studying an appropriate curriculum.

Leaders have introduced a new curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE). All pupils will learn about British values, relationships, and a range of faiths and cultures. The curriculum is new. Leaders have plans to make sure teachers deliver these lessons well, so that they prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Leaders have improved careers education. Pupils say that the information they get about careers and next steps in education is useful. Leaders have developed a programme of enrichment activities that includes sporting and creative arts. Some pupils enjoy these opportunities.

Trustees and members of the academy improvement board know the school well. They have identified priorities for improving safeguarding, provision for pupils with SEND, attendance and behaviour. Trust leaders have worked in the school to support the school to improve in those areas. Leaders have clearly identified the training that they need to deliver to staff. Most staff value the support and training that they get to address weaknesses.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have provided essential training to staff. They have improved systems so that they can quickly identify where pupils need support. When they need support from other agencies, leaders act swiftly and appropriately to ensure that vulnerable pupils get the support they need. They keep detailed and accurate records of concerns and actions.

The school has made good use of support from external consultants. Leaders have acted on the advice they have received to make improvements to the SEND provision and attendance systems.

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

Yours sincerely

John Spragg
His Majesty's Inspector