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Mr Scott Burnside
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Burnside

Special measures monitoring inspection of Chaucer School

Following my visit with Steve Crossley, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 November 2016, 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 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 April 2016.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2016

- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - leaders develop an accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
 - improvement plans include sharp and precise outcomes throughout the year so that progress can be measured and leaders at all levels are held accountable for bringing about change
 - leaders at all levels are able to accurately evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through linking it closely with the impact it has on pupils' outcomes
 - subject leaders are accurate in judging how well pupils are achieving
 - all teachers follow the school marking and assessment policy so that all pupils are clear about what they need to do next and can act on teachers' comments and advice
 - additional funding, including pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, is used effectively to reduce the gaps in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils needing to catch up.

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - leaders establish where the best teaching is taking place and share this across the school
 - accurate assessment information is used across all year groups to enable teachers to plan work that fully meets the learning needs of different groups of pupils so that outcomes improve
 - teachers check carefully on the progress pupils are making so that they are clear about any pupils' misconceptions and misunderstandings
 - leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are closely linked to detailed review of the progress that pupils are making in all subjects
 - all teachers have high expectations for all pupils and only accept work that is presented to a high standard and completed.

- Improve behaviour and safety substantially by:
 - quickly tackling poor behaviour in lessons so that all pupils are able to work without interruption and are supported by teachers who consistently follow the school's behaviour and discipline system
 - further improving attendance and reducing the number of pupils excluded from the school so that they are at least in line with national averages.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 November 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including the school self-evaluation document and development plans. Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, governors, trustees and pupils in both formal and informal meetings. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment in 11 lessons, four jointly with school leaders, and carried out a learning walk. Inspectors also visited the school inclusion room and the on-site alternative provision.

Context

Significant staffing changes have taken place since the last inspection. The senior leadership team has decreased to five core members with responsibilities aligned against key areas for school improvement. An associate leader, with two associate leaders specifically dedicated to teaching, learning and assessment, supports each member of the senior leadership team. In total, 12 members of staff have left the school and eight members of staff have joined the school. The school has also appointed a new chair of the governing body. In addition to this, Tapton Academy Trust has made some new key appointments including a director of standards to work across all schools in the trust. This is to support school leaders in their drive to raise standards for all.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

School leaders have made an accurate analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Following the last inspection, leaders swiftly commissioned a number of external reviews including on the use and impact of the pupil premium funding, the effectiveness of arrangements for safeguarding and standards of behaviour in the school. Using information from these alongside their own analysis and the previous inspection report, they have developed robust action plans. These include precise outcomes that are within an appropriate timescale. The plans are clear and identify the much-needed lines of accountability.

Leaders with responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment are working hard to ensure that staff understand and implement the new teaching model to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Through this, lessons are now planned to support learning more effectively and pupils have a greater understanding of what to do. The majority of this improvement work has involved embedding these lesson structures. Leaders are yet to evaluate the quality of teaching within the strategy and as a result it is too soon to see the impact of this approach on pupils' outcomes.

Using the new assessment system and data management system, subject leaders

are being held to account more by their line managers for pupils' progress. This means that subject leaders have a greater awareness of where pupils may be underperforming and are able to take action more swiftly to ensure that pupils make at least expected progress. Subject leaders are also beginning to hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make in the classes that they teach.

Leaders have carried out a comprehensive evaluation of the spending of additional funding including the pupil premium, catch-up funding and additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Through this, they have identified which strategies have not had the desired effect and replaced them with other, well-thought-out strategies. For example, the school no longer uses external providers for alternative provision and is moving forward with an in-house alternative provision. Leaders have also increased the amount of time for numeracy and literacy in the curriculum to improve pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics, but also across all subjects.

Through the new quality assurance role within the senior leadership team, performance management systems are now robust and are fully in line with school improvement planning. This means that all staff have a target to improve pupils' progress and outcomes alongside improving their teaching. The impact of better performance management is clear in the more consistent approach to planning teaching and learning but it is too soon to see the impact on pupils' progress.

The new chair of the governing body provides rigorous challenge to school leaders and to the trust. She is knowledgeable and has a firm understanding of the journey the school is taking and the progress it is making. She holds leaders to account regularly and works alongside them to shape development plans.

Leaders and managers have ensured that safeguarding is effective. There are aspects of exemplary practice, which leaders share across the trust. Extensive staff training has taken place, taking account of all government guidelines. School leaders have strong relationships with external agencies. These relationships help to support vulnerable pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Improvements are evident in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. For example, during the inspection some teachers used questioning effectively to promote deeper learning and to challenge further the most able pupils. However, teaching quality remains a mixed picture, most notably where teachers do not follow the whole-school strategy.

The impact of teachers' feedback on pupils' progress, although improving, remains variable. Some pupils do not make as much progress as others.

Most teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve and their

aspirations for pupils. Pupils are beginning to take more pride in their work because expectations are much clearer and pupils want to do well. Where the quality of work in books remains poor, teachers are beginning to tackle this.

Through the school teaching and learning strategy, teachers are becoming more skilful at checking pupils' understanding and misconceptions. Effective teaching in science and maths, for example, allows teachers to address misconceptions quickly, meaning that pupils can get on with the work and make better progress. In vocational subjects, strong exam and assessment preparation builds pupils' confidence in answering exam questions.

Pupils in alternative provision are continuing with subjects such as English, science and mathematics while having the opportunity to develop their skills in different areas such as construction, hair and beauty, horticulture and bike maintenance. This motivates them to try to stay in education.

Leaders know where the best teaching is across the school. Through appropriate training teachers share ideas, with different staff contributing throughout the term. Plans are in place to evaluate the impact of this training on the overall quality of teaching in the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

School leaders have worked alongside external consultants to develop a 'positive-discipline' system, which is improving behaviour. Pupils report that behaviour is better and they feel safer because fights rarely happen now.

Pupils are able to get on with their learning because the majority of teachers are implementing the positive-discipline strategy. Pupils are visibly calmer and respectful to one another and attitudes to learning are more positive. They move calmly around the site and socialise well in different areas of the school.

Where teaching is not sufficiently challenging and/or the positive-discipline strategy is not used, some low-level disruption occurs, which prevents some pupils from learning.

Attendance for some groups, such as children looked after, has improved and is above the national average. However, this is not the case for attendance overall. This is in part due to the increased rigour and expectations of the behaviour system which have led to a higher number of exclusions in the first half term of 2016. This is also because new initiatives and strategies have recently been implemented and have not had time to make a difference.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders recognise that there is a lot of work to do to ensure the best outcomes for pupils in key stage 4. Current school information is not showing that progress for these pupils is increasing rapidly enough. Pupils in key stage 3 are making better progress as the new strategies for teaching and behaviour management are having a greater impact than at key stage 4. Leaders at all levels are working together to improve this.

The effective spending of catch-up funding has raised pupils' reading ages for those involved in the intervention, which means they can access more of the curriculum. The spending of numeracy catch-up funding has not been as effective and is currently under review.

The use of the pupil premium funding did not lead to an improvement in pupils' progress last year. It has now been refined and there is a clear and robust plan for monitoring the effectiveness of the strategies implemented. It is, however, too early to see the impact on outcomes.

In 2016, the number of pupils gaining a grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics increased from the previous year but remained below national averages.

External support

The trust fully recognises that the school needs more support than was previously given. Through the streamlining of its own procedures and additional appointments, further support is now in place, for example for subject leaders and to help improve standards across the school.

The external support provided by the trust is beginning to have an impact. The school also receives support from an external consultant who visits on a termly basis and from the Rodillian Academies Trust for the positive-discipline strategy. This is helping school leaders to evaluate the strategy and plan their next steps for further improvement.