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14 July 2017

Mr Scott Burnside
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Burnside

Special measures monitoring inspection of Chaucer School

Following my visit with Darren Stewart, Her Majesty's Inspector, Carl Sugden, Ofsted Inspector and Toni Spoons, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 28 June 2017, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 2016. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers in music, humanities, modern foreign languages, physical education and drama.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local academy committee, 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 teacher 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 that 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 third monitoring inspection on 28 June 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of the local academy committee, a representative from the trust, senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in lessons and at breaktime and carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work alongside school leaders.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, there have been further changes to staffing. A director of mathematics has been appointed by the trust to work in the school full time from September 2017. An acting head of science has been appointed internally. Seven graduates from Teach First and Researchers in Schools will begin their teacher training in September in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. The leadership team has also been reviewed and accountabilities redistributed and streamlined.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The chair of the local academy committee and the headteacher conducted a review of senior leadership. Following this, a restructure of the senior leadership team took place. Lines of responsibility and accountability are now clearer as a result. Each senior leader has an action plan for their own development and the development of their area of accountability. The headteacher, representatives from the local academy committee and the trust meet with senior leaders to ensure that the pace of improvement accelerates.

The headteacher is continuing to strengthen the systems that are in place for checking the school's effectiveness. Senior and middle leaders are now more aware of the high expectations of the headteacher and the trust. The impact of these procedures is starting to be seen at leadership level, but there is further work to do to embed these expectations at all levels.

Leaders are continuing to evaluate the effectiveness of the spending of additional funding for pupils who are disadvantaged. Leaders use some funds well, for example in ensuring that pupils who would benefit from alternative provision have access to it. However, a more flexible approach to spending is needed to ensure that leaders effectively address pupils' needs. For example, attendance for some disadvantaged pupils, particularly in Year 9, needs to urgently improve.

Spending of additional funds for pupils who need to catch up in literacy are helping to speed up their progress; these pupils' reading ages are now improving. After a slow start to using the numeracy catch-up funding, leaders are now trialling

different approaches aimed at improving pupils' numeracy skills. Early signs indicate that pupils who are part of the trials are starting to catch up with their peers.

Leaders are showing an improved understanding of how to check and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They have moved away from a compliance-based model and are beginning to have more of a focus on reviewing pupils' progress. Following the restructure of senior leadership, more time has been dedicated to evaluating the quality of teaching, establishing a more realistic view of the quality of teaching and offering staff constructive feedback. Although the quality of teaching is beginning to improve, further work remains to ensure that all teachers know what good progress and appropriate challenge are for all learners.

Leaders provide teachers with information about pupils' progress so that teachers are able to plan learning to meet pupils' varying needs and abilities. While some teachers are beginning to use this information to good effect, it is not used consistently well across the various curriculum subjects. Leaders have not yet ensured that all teachers know how to meet the varying needs of pupils. Pupils' progress is not accelerating rapidly enough as a result.

Leaders continue to ensure that training for staff is focused around pupils' progress. A recent training session on the use of questioning was well attended by staff on a voluntary basis. However, it is too soon to say whether questioning is improving because of this.

Staff absence and a lack of permanent staffing has slowed down the rate of improvement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Leaders are taking action to address this and are taking appropriate steps to secure more stable staffing for the next academic year.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Lessons now follow a clear sequence. This allows pupils to recognise the stages of learning and know what is coming next and, in turn, develops their confidence.

In subject areas where teaching is stronger, such as modern foreign languages and humanities, pupils do better because teaching is well planned and tailored to meeting the individual needs of pupils. In English, mathematics and science, although this is an improving picture, teachers do not ensure that they challenge all pupils appropriately. As a result, progress is held back in these subjects. In mathematics and English, sometimes pupils complete work that is too easy and has been covered previously. Leaders have recently introduced a new approach to teaching, known as 'teaching to the top'. This approach aims to ensure that pupils are challenged effectively, expectations are high and pupils are encouraged to work hard. It is too soon to see the impact of this approach.

Middle leaders and teachers, along with trust staff, are continuing to focus on improving the quality of assessment, for example in science. This is leading to a more consistent approach. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this on pupils' achievement.

Teachers are beginning to develop strategies to identify and challenge pupils' misconceptions. In science, for example, following a subject knowledge audit and support from the trust, staff subject knowledge is improving and misconceptions are tackled appropriately.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Attendance remains a similar picture to the previous academic year and is below the national average. Some small improvements are evident. For example, the attendance of Year 7 pupils is now above average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is also decreasing, but this still remains too high. Leaders recognise that attendance requires further improvement. There are some positive individual success stories, particularly when pupils who are vulnerable or disadvantaged have been supported to improve their attendance.

Behaviour is continuing to improve. Over time, there has been a reduction in the amount of poor behaviour, including fewer removals from lessons and less internal truancy, verbal abuse and fixed-term exclusions. However, the overall number of incidents remains too high and further work is needed to address this.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons remains variable. It is better when teaching is adapted to meet pupils' varying needs and abilities. When work lacks challenge or expectations are not high enough, some off-task behaviour occurs. This limits the progress that pupils make. Some teachers are too slow to implement the school's positive discipline policy to tackle off-task behaviour.

Leaders' introduction of the 'super seven' initiative aimed at improving pupils' presentation and pride in their work is having a positive impact for some pupils, as seen in pupils' books. Some pupils are beginning to refer to these standards for presentation to improve their work. However, its impact is variable because not all teachers are ensuring that it is applied.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes continue to improve for most pupils. Differences in the rate of progress of disadvantaged pupils compared to their peers are diminishing in Year 7. In other year groups, the differences are also reducing, but not as quickly. Year 9 and Year 11 remain a worry for the school. While Year 11 have made some gains, they are likely to have underperformed in their recent external examinations. Leaders at all levels and teachers recognise that there is a large amount still to do to improve outcomes for Year 9.

Appropriate literacy and numeracy interventions are improving the skills of pupils who need to catch up with their peers. Through in-class support, additional support outside of lessons and use of better resources, these pupils are making better progress.

External support

The trust is continuing to provide high levels of support to the school in a number of ways. This includes regular accountability meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders, support for new middle leaders, sharing of good practice across the trust and support with recruitment of staff.