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Mr James Laidler
Headteacher
Newbridge Short Stay Secondary School
Midland Road
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Worcestershire
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Dear Mr Laidler

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Newbridge Short Stay
Secondary School**

Following my visit to your school on 18–19 April 2018, 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 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 March 2017.

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 chair of the multi-academy trust board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deb Jenkins
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2017.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, teaching, assessment, outcomes and behaviour by ensuring that:
 - the governing body holds leaders to close account for rapidly improving the quality of education provided by the school
 - additional funding is used well in order to improve outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, low-prior-attaining pupils and disadvantaged pupils
 - processes for managing the performance of teaching staff hold them to close account for improving the progress made by all groups of pupils
 - effective systems are put in place to improve the quality of teaching in the school
 - accurate assessment of what pupils know and can do takes place regularly and is used by teaching staff to inform planning to allow pupils to make improved progress from their starting points
 - staff are given opportunities to lead developments in the school, and those with responsibilities for particular aspects of the school's work take effective action to make improvements
 - recently introduced systems for promoting positive behaviour are developed to secure sustained improvements in this area of the school's work
 - the new curriculum is embedded and is used to engage all pupils in appropriate learning activities and to encourage positive behaviour and regular attendance.
- Take immediate and effective action to improve the attendance of all groups of pupils and significantly reduce the proportion of pupils who do not receive full-time education.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 18 April 2018 to 19 April 2018

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documents and met with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, a group of staff, parents and carers, the chair of the governing body, the local authority's senior education adviser for vulnerable learners and a headteacher from the Advance Trust. She visited lessons on both days, accompanied by senior leaders, and looked at pupils' work in books. She checked the school's website and the school's single central record which evidences checks on staff recruitment.

Context

At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher had been in post for less than two weeks. Since this time he has been better supported by the trust, enabling significant changes and strengthening of the leadership structure of the school. An additional assistant headteacher has been appointed and subject leadership for English and mathematics has been reorganised. Following the departure of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), a SENCo from the trust was seconded to the school, initially for one day per week, but is now supporting the school for two days per week. Some of these posts are held on a temporary basis but the headteacher plans to recruit permanent staff in due course. Several members of staff are no longer employed at the school. The complete reorganisation of the governing body, including the appointment of a new and competent chairperson, has contributed to the overall drive for improvement.

Leaders and governors have been faced with a lack of clarity regarding the school's purpose in the past. While it is described as a short stay school, too many pupils have remained on the school's role because of the shortage of specialist school places within the local area. More recently, providers of education in the local area appear to be committed to developing Newbridge as a 'preventative' provision, where excluded pupils will be educated for a short period of time before returning to their mainstream school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The commitment from the trust, the transformation of the governing body, and the strengthened leadership team have ensured that improvements, from a low starting point, are now being made. The headteacher has not been prepared to compromise on his high standards and all staff are now being held to account for their performance. The pace of change has been hampered because leaders have had to manage some previous staffing issues but the headteacher has maintained the focus on school improvement.

An external review of governance took place in November 2017. The trust had already reviewed their model of governance prior to this, as they recognised that governance arrangements at Newbridge were not fit for purpose. The governing body has now been strengthened by governors from within the trust and newly appointed members. The new chair of governors, who is also a trust board member, is ensuring more rigour and accountability in governor meetings. Half-termly reviews of the external review of governance show that strong progress is being made to all aspects of governance. However, there is still work to do. Link governor roles have now been established, but they are not yet fully developed, and there is no clear picture of governor training. Minutes from governing body meetings show that governors recognise that they require additional training. There is no monitoring of the school's single central record, where some administrative gaps were identified at the start of the inspection. These gaps were subsequently addressed by the end. Also, governors do not check that the school's website is compliant with the Department for Education's requirements about what academies should publish on their website.

It is clear that staff are supportive of the improvements being made and share the headteacher's aspirations for the school. Comments made by staff during the inspection, such as 'Everyone wants to make things better', highlight the shared commitment and drive to improve the school for the pupils. Leaders have now ensured that systems are in place to manage staff's performance. This extends to the performance of teaching assistants. As a result, leaders have been able to tackle any underperformance and provide the necessary support and challenge to individual staff.

Leaders' school self-evaluation is overoptimistic. It is evident that progress has been made since the last inspection but, due to the very low starting points, there is still some way to go. Governors have not yet challenged leaders' judgements enough or ensured that information leaders give them is based on compelling evidence.

The introduction of systematic monitoring and observation of teachers' performance has resulted in higher expectations of staff and improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers now have clearly defined expectations, based on the teacher standards, and information collected by leaders shows an improving picture of teaching and learning. However, leaders recognise that the quality of teaching is not yet consistently strong.

The appointment of an assistant headteacher who has responsibility for teaching, learning and outcomes has had a significant impact on the drive to improve teaching, learning and assessment. A framework for assessment and the monitoring of pupils' progress have now been established. Progress made by individuals as well as different groups of pupils is tracked closely and shared with staff. Evidence collected over two terms shows that pupils' rates of progress are improving over time. The assessment framework not only takes into account pupils' baseline

information, but also their previous achievements at the end of key stage 2. As a result, leaders are able to set aspirational targets for pupils, as they have a good understanding of pupils' abilities.

Since the appointment of the new SENCo, pupils' needs are being identified much more quickly and effectively. As a consequence, an increasing number of pupils are now being assessed for education, health and care plans. Through their daily debriefs, teachers are able to identify pupils who require additional support in lessons and help is targeted according to those needs. The SENCo is working with staff to develop a more systematic approach to support for individual pupils, but this is not yet fully in place.

The headteacher has developed strong working relationships with other schools in the trust. As a result, schools have benefited mutually from the sharing of expertise and additional professional development opportunities. Staff are increasingly being given opportunities to lead developments within the school. The current acting assistant headteacher takes her pastoral responsibilities seriously. She has a clear vision for implementing a research-based approach to supporting children and young people with their social and emotional development, and the promotion of positive behaviour. Staff have begun training in this approach, and anecdotal evidence shows that it is having a positive impact on pupils' engagement in learning. Leaders acknowledge that their behaviour policy requires a comprehensive review so that it emphasises their renewed approach to developing positive behaviours. Staff require further clarity on managing behaviour so that they are clear about strategies to use, and can apply them in a consistent way.

Until very recently, staff absence has hampered the monitoring of patterns of behaviour in school. Information about pupils' behaviour has been collected but not analysed in any meaningful way. Leaders are not yet able to identify any patterns in the use of physical interventions in any detail, although their use remains low.

The introduction of a programme to accelerate pupils' reading abilities is showing early signs of success. The member of staff leading this approach is enthusiastic about the difference it is making to pupils' reading abilities, and is nurturing a love of reading among the pupils. Daily reading sessions have raised the profile of reading in the school and pupils are being supported to find books that interest them. The small group of pupils who are currently benefiting from this approach have made significant gains in their reading abilities in a short space of time.

The work to embed the curriculum requires further improvement. Some changes have had a positive impact on pupils' learning. Leaders have changed the way in which English and mathematics are timetabled and delivered. Staff are able to plan together and support each other in the delivery of their subject. For the first time, all pupils are to be entered for GCSEs in English and mathematics. Conversely, the delivery of other subjects has been hindered due to staff absence. As a result, pupils have not been given the support they need or access to specialist teaching.

This will have a marked impact on outcomes for Year 11 pupils, who have not been entered for any external accreditation in subjects other than English and mathematics. Leaders know that there is more to do to ensure that the curriculum is meeting the needs of all pupils in the school.

A review of the use of pupil premium funding was commissioned in January 2018. Leaders did not receive the outcome of this review until the first day of the inspection so have not been able to respond to the areas of improvement identified in the review. The governing body have allocated a link governor to oversee the use of pupil premium funding and ensure that actions identified in the review are addressed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Following the previous inspection, leaders introduced 'The Newbridge Way' – a model for the delivery of lessons to ensure consistency in teaching across the school. This has contributed to raising standards in teaching and learning in the school and has had a positive impact on the progress pupils are now making. Evidence of work and how it contributes to pupils' progress is now being gathered in a systematic way. Leaders carry out half-termly checks on all aspects of teaching and learning, including lesson observations, pupils' progress over time, and scrutinies of work in books. Teachers are now beginning to use assessment information to target support for pupils in lessons. As a result of this systematic approach, standards in teaching and learning are improving. Leaders know where gaps exist and are holding teachers to account so that further improvements can be made.

Pupils' behaviour for learning is not yet good enough. Some progress is being made and leaders asserted that pupils are now staying in lessons more than they were previously. During the inspection, few pupils were out of lessons and leaders say this is more typical of the current picture of the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The recently reorganised tutor groups, each with a consistent staff team are helping to develop stronger, positive relationships with pupils. This consistent support is helping pupils to positively re-engage with school. Staff are clearly committed to supporting these vulnerable pupils, who have experienced a difficult or disrupted education in the past. The appointment of a full-time safeguarding member of staff is mitigating the limited support available from the local authority, and ensuring that staff do their utmost to keep pupils safe from harm.

Some pupils are taking pride in their work and some work in books is well presented. However, these high standards are not reflected consistently in pupils' work across the school. Some pupils take little care with their work. In some lessons, pupils disturb the learning of others through low-level disruptive behaviour,

such as swearing, antagonising comments and refusal to work.

The appointment of an attendance officer is beginning to make a difference to some pupils' attendance. The school has now employed a minibuss driver who will collect some pupils at the beginning of the day if they have not arrived at school. The attendance officer is now analysing attendance information for all pupils, and leaders are now able to target support for specific pupils who are not attending as frequently as they should. There is evidence that overall attendance is improving, but this is not yet high enough.

Pupils' overall attendance is hampered by the use of part-time timetables, which was identified at the previous inspection. Leaders have a compelling rationale for the use of part-time timetables, but there is currently no oversight of the frequency of their use or any analysis on how effective they are in improving pupils' engagement and attendance. During the week of the inspection, scrutiny of attendance registers showed that only half of the pupils attending that week were expected to be in school on a full-time basis. In addition, some pupils were incorrectly coded as being educated off site.

Pupils' limited access to a full-time education is further exacerbated by the length of the school day, which is quite short. The local authority commissions places from the school for 25 hours per week and pupils are legally entitled to a full-time education. Part-time timetables should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Outcomes for pupils

In 2017, pupils' outcomes were poor. Pupils left the school with either few or no qualifications. Consequently, just under half of these former pupils are not in education, employment or training. However, 2018 is likely to be an improving picture, with all pupils entered for GCSEs in English and mathematics, preparing them more effectively for the next stage in their learning. However, opportunities for pupils to gain wider accreditation need to improve with urgency.

Information shows that more pupils are making expected or better progress this term, compared to last. Progress outcomes are currently stronger in mathematics than in English. There is little difference in the performance of disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers. Leaders are currently tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics, but are not yet collecting and analysing progress information in other subjects.

Currently, some pupils have already secured a place at a local college. Improvements to the work experience opportunities pupils are having this year are contributing to their readiness for transition into college.

External support

Collaboration with other schools in the trust is having a positive impact on school improvements. Senior leaders are carrying out joint observations of teaching and learning to ensure accurate judgements. The school is benefiting from peer-to-peer reviews on aspects of performance, including safeguarding and pupils' outcomes.