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Mr James Laidler
Headteacher
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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 with Lesley Yates, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 22 and 23 January 2019, 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 March 2017. 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing board, 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 third monitoring inspection on 22 to 23 January 2019

Evidence

Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and the executive principal to discuss the work of the school and its impact. Inspectors met with the chair and four other members of the local governing board. The lead inspector met with the recently appointed director of the trust board and another headteacher from the trust. Inspectors examined a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and action plan, minutes of meetings of the local governing board, information about the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and progress information. They looked at the school's analysis of behaviour and attendance information, and observed pupils' arrival at school and their behaviour during the inspection. Inspectors visited lessons in both key stages and talked to pupils informally throughout the inspection. Inspectors evaluated pupils' work in books, jointly with leaders. A representative from the local authority was not available to meet with inspectors.

Context

Since the last inspection, more pupils have been admitted to the school. There are currently 53 pupils on roll, with more pupils waiting to be admitted. Staffing has remained relatively stable. The temporary assistant headteacher has been appointed to the substantive role of pastoral assistant headteacher. The previously newly appointed subject leader for English has left the school. Two new teachers have been appointed to the school. One has already taken up their post, and the other, who is an English specialist, will begin working at the school in the summer term.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school have strengthened further since the last monitoring inspection and there is now a substantive senior leadership team in place. The membership of the local governing board has increased. Governors now have a wider skill-set, enabling them to offer more informed challenge and support. Link governor roles are now established and there is a greater focus by the board on school improvement. Governors know that there is still more to be done to improve the school but articulate their high aspirations for the pupils clearly.

Leaders have taken further steps to enhance the school environment. The school corridors and classrooms have been painted and additional decor provides a more welcoming environment for the pupils. The recently installed bicycle store enables pupils from the local area to cycle to school independently and store their bicycles securely.

The school's current designation as a short-stay school does not reflect its pupil population. Despite leaders' best efforts, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and resulting education, health and care plans (EHCP) remain at the school for longer than they should. This is because the local authority has not yet identified suitable alternative placements in specialist provision for these pupils. In addition, some pupils in key stage 3 who are ready to move back to mainstream provision are not doing so because there is no formal arrangement between the school and the local authority to achieve this. The trust and leaders have considered these issues at length and as a result are now consulting with all stakeholders about a change to the school's designation. They are proposing that the school will only admit key stage 4 pupils from September 2019.

Leaders have made further changes to the internal organisation of the school because of the changing needs of pupils who join the school. They have created an additional class for a group of newly admitted key stage 4 pupils, providing focused support to enable these pupils to achieve potentially positive outcomes in their GCSEs by the end of Year 11. Leaders are planning to make further changes to the organisation of the school before the summer term so that pupils whom they identify as needing a more therapeutic curriculum will receive it.

The school's self-evaluation and corresponding action plan accurately identifies the strengths and areas for development in the school and the resulting actions that need to be taken. However, leaders are over-reliant on the outcome of monitoring visits to identify their next steps for development, so need to become more evaluative to ensure that the pace of improvement is good enough.

Staff continue to be confident about how to safeguard pupils and know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil's welfare. Leaders have assessed the risks in the local area suitably to ensure that pupils are safe when out in the local community.

Staff have recently received additional training to enable them to better support pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, including a focus on anxiety and attachment. Leaders have arranged further training this term on relevant themes, including self-harm and transgender issues.

During the inspection, inspectors identified a fire hazard where a fire door and emergency exit appeared to be routinely locked. Leaders responded swiftly to this and have put plans in place to address this as a matter of urgency.

The school's curriculum has been further enhanced. All pupils in key stage 3 and some pupils in key stage 4 are now being taught science. History has been introduced into the curriculum. Pupils in key stage 4 will soon be entered for entry-level qualifications in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and history. The recently lengthened school day allows pupils to pursue other interests, such as photography, or engage in physical activities off-site, such as climbing and swimming. However, the 'choose and repair' session at the end of the school day

lacks purpose and structure. Leaders plan to review this session as part of their upcoming reorganisation.

A group of key stage 4 pupils are benefiting from attending the local further education college to train in mechanics and construction. These pupils are on track to gain BTEC qualifications in both subjects. They are well supported by school staff at the college. Their rates of attendance at college are higher than their rates of attendance at school, demonstrating their engagement and enjoyment of these courses. All pupils are benefiting from the careers advice and guidance available to them at school and are beginning to talk about their next steps into college or employment.

Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is more systematic. They focus on the quality of teaching and of work in pupils' books. Leaders know where there are strengths in teaching and are beginning to use models of strong teaching to support other staff. They also know where additional support is needed and ensure that this is put in place for individual staff. Leaders have improved their systems for checking pupils' progress. They know how much progress pupils are making in the foundation subjects.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) continues to work with other agencies to identify and assess pupils' needs, including those pupils who need to be assessed for an EHCP. The speech and language therapist is working with staff to incorporate pupils' speech and language therapy targets into teachers' daily planning. Inspectors saw some evidence that this work is under way, but it is not yet in place for all pupils. Leaders have recently updated their SEND information report, but it does not meet the requirements of the code of practice. As a result, prospective parents are not being given all the information they need. The SENCo works effectively with existing families to signpost them to additional services which may be of benefit to them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching across the school is variable and leaders' own evaluations reflect the same findings. Teaching and learning are most effective when pupils are clear about what they are learning and are supported well. Staff have developed strong working relationships with the pupils, building mutual trust and understanding. Staff manage low-level disruption in lessons well and teaching assistants show skills in re-engaging pupils in their learning.

There remains some inconsistency in the quality of teachers' questioning across subjects and key stages. Where questioning is strong, pupils are able to develop their knowledge of the subject and apply it to more complex tasks, such as factorising quadratic expressions. Questioning is weaker when teachers accept pupils' answers without challenge or seeking further explanation.

The teaching of English is improving. Some activities are planned well; in key stage 3, the theme of 'superheroes' stimulated pupils' interest and attention. Inspectors saw some key stage 4 pupils being supported effectively in developing their curriculum vitae. They were using their knowledge of college along with the careers guidance they had received to inform their work. In other subjects, teachers plan creative activities that they know are likely to engage pupils in their learning. In key stage 4, for example, inspectors saw pupils working cooperatively to design and build a 'splurge gun', linked to the history theme of 1920s prohibition in the United States of America.

The teaching of mathematics is a strength of the school. This is reflected in the progress pupils are making, and the work in their mathematics books. Inspectors saw teachers making sure that activities were appropriately matched to pupils' abilities. Consequently, pupils remained focused on their learning and developed new knowledge and skills. For example, pupils in a key stage 4 mathematics lesson were supported well with practical equipment to develop their understanding of calculating the volume of 3D shapes. The strong subject knowledge seen in the teaching of mathematics, as well as the high aspirations shared with pupils, are enabling pupils to achieve well.

The quality of work in pupils' books reflects the variation in the quality of teaching. Overall, books are well presented and most include tracker sheets to identify pupils' progress. However, these are not being used consistently by all staff. The over-reliance on worksheets in some subjects limits pupils' opportunities to write at length. Some pupils do not have the opportunity to complete or improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The strong relationships seen throughout the school help to maintain pupils' focus in lessons. The use of rewards positively reinforces pupils' engagement in learning and acceptable behaviour. Inspectors saw many pupils focused on learning and engaging in discussions with members of staff in an appropriate way.

Brunch arrangements continue to have a positive impact on pupils' well-being. Pupils sit and eat together in their tutor groups. Consistent expectations for lunchtime behaviours are on display in every room, and additional personalised targets are also in place.

Pupils who find it difficult to learn are adequately supervised out of lessons. However, inspectors saw several pupils who were out of lessons for extended periods of time, trying to disrupt the learning of others by repeatedly kicking classroom doors. Strategies and expectations to reduce the disruption and bring pupils back into lessons were unclear. Inspectors' scrutiny of the recently introduced individual success plans show that strategies to support pupils who need extra help to regulate their behaviour are not explicitly stated. Leaders do not reflect well enough on daily debriefings of incidents to identify likely triggers for

pupils' behaviour. As a result, strategies are not defined well enough to avoid repeats of incidents for some pupils.

There also appears to be an inconsistent approach to how staff manage pupils' use of inappropriate language. On some occasions, pupils are reminded to use alternative words, others are told to stop and some are ignored. Individual success plans do not make it clear what the agreed strategies for each pupil are. This results in potentially inconsistent approaches to managing pupils' behaviour.

Pupils' attendance has improved, compared to a similar period to last year. It has risen from 54% to 67%. Leaders continue to focus on improving attendance as they know it can be even better. They act much more swiftly to check on pupils' well-being if pupils do not arrive at school or subsequently abscond from the site. There is a high staff presence outside the school at the beginning of the day, with register checks for both arrival at school and arrival in lessons. Staff can quickly identify what kind of mood pupils are in, enabling them to put additional activities in place to reduce pupils' anxieties. Leaders say that fewer pupils are now late for school. They provided individual examples of improvements in punctuality. Leaders are not yet able to identify trends in lateness as they have only recently begun gathering this information. Inspectors observed several pupils getting to school on time but then subsequently arriving late to lessons. Additionally, few pupils engage in tutorial time effectively and are slow to start learning. This was an issue at the last inspection and there has been limited improvement in this area.

There are a few pupils who remain on part-time timetables because they should be placed in a specialist setting. Leaders make sure that they review these arrangements regularly to ensure that pupils are getting the support they need.

Fixed-term exclusions have increased slightly overall. Leaders and governors assert that this is because they no longer use part-time timetables as a means of managing challenging behaviour. If a pupil has to be sent home as a result of their poor behaviour, it is recorded as a fixed-term exclusion rather than as part-time attendance, consistent with the Department for Education's requirements. However, permanent exclusions are reducing over time and there have not been any since the last inspection. Leaders have put in place an effective system for restorative work following a pupil's exclusion, which includes support and engagement with the local police community support officer. Leaders say that pupils are beginning to take more responsibility for their actions following exclusion.

Incidents of negative behaviour have decreased from 100 to 40 over a term. The types of incidents remain the same and include non-compliance and persistent disruption. Leaders now have a better system for the recording and analysis of bullying incidents, and staff are clear about how bullying is defined. Leaders are now using information about pupils' behaviour as a catalyst for further changes to the organisation of the school and the school day.

Outcomes for pupils

The school's current progress information shows an improving picture for the pupils. The school information suggests that there is only a small variation between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils in the school. Pupils are making better progress in all subjects, though there is still some variability between subjects.

Most pupils are on track to achieve their entry-level qualifications. In vocational studies and PSHE, all pupils are on track. There has been a significant improvement in pupils' progress in English and mathematics over the last year. Teachers are beginning to challenge pupils to attempt more complex tasks. Teachers help pupils to understand how they can improve their outcomes and raise their aspirations, by attempting more complex examination questions at a higher grade, for example. Staff are supporting pupils well in managing the pressures of additional examinations. Pupils are practising taking tests every half term, to enable them to be more resilient and better prepared for their external examinations.

The varied opportunities that the curriculum provides for pupils, such as local community activities and vocational courses, are helping pupils to be better prepared for their next steps in employment, education or training after they leave school. Leaders are planning to extend their vocational offer further to pupils as they recognise that pupils are more engaged in this area of the curriculum.

External support

The school is benefiting from more focused support from the trust. The recently appointed director of the trust board has a good understanding of the needs of the school and its pupils. The executive principal of the trust continues to provide effective support for leaders. The trust has recently facilitated additional advice and challenge from another headteacher in the trust who has experience in working with pupils with SEMH needs. Staff are now able to work collaboratively across the trust, rather than in isolation.

The school continues to be hampered by the lack of information provided by the local authority. There is still no strategic vision for the area's alternative provision. The information the school receives from the local authority about new pupils due to be admitted to the school is scant. As a result, some pupils have been put at potential risk of harm, because their vulnerabilities have not been shared in a timely way with school leaders. Leaders have now made the decision to use their own resources to gather the necessary information about pupils, prior to entry, so that they can provide them with more informed support.