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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 Sue Morris-King, Senior Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 25 and 26 September 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second 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

The school's action 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 second monitoring inspection on 25 to 26 September 2018

Evidence

Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior and middle leaders to discuss the work of the school and its impact. Inspectors met with the executive headteacher of Advance Trust and four members of the local governing board, one of whom is the chair of the governing body. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, action plan, pupil premium review, monitoring information, assessment and progress information and analyses of behaviour and attendance. Inspectors visited lessons in both key stages and evaluated pupils' work in books. They observed pupils' arrival at school and talked to them informally about their work.

Context

Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have stabilised and further strengthened the governing body, the leadership team and the staff team. A new subject leader for English has been appointed. There has been one staff resignation. Two additional governors have been recruited to the governing body. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is now supporting pupils for three days a week. Leaders plan to make a substantive appointment to the post of pastoral assistant headteacher this term.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and governors have maintained the momentum of school improvement since the last monitoring visit. There is now a palpable sense of drive to improve the school further. Changes which leaders have made to the reorganisation of the school, such as new school zones for different key stages, are contributing to the smoother running of the school. The introduction of 'brunch' in the middle of the day provides a nurturing environment for pupils to sit in their tutor groups to eat lunch. Pupils' targets show that staff are committed to helping pupils understand social expectations of behaviour during this break.

Leaders' self-evaluation of the school is more accurate and links clearly to areas for development in the school's action plan. Staff now have a better awareness of areas for improvement because leaders are sharing their vision more widely. While the action plan is fit for purpose, some success criteria are not stated well enough, which makes it more difficult for governors to check that progress is being made in a timely way.

The governing body and the trust are holding leaders to account well for their actions, as well as providing suitable support for leaders. Recent governor minutes demonstrate that governors are being provided with relevant and detailed

information about all aspects of school improvement. As a result, governors have a good understanding of and can articulate the growing strengths and areas for further development. Two new governors are further strengthening governors' capacity to improve the school. The governing body is in the process of linking governors to areas of specific responsibility, such as safeguarding, to improve the oversight of the school's work and its impact.

All staff have received updated safeguarding training in response to the recent changes in legislation made by the Secretary of State. Leaders have also ensured that their safeguarding policy has been reviewed and updated with this in mind.

Leaders and governors have responded well to the externally led pupil premium review. They have now developed a clear strategy for the use of the funding. Additional support, such as reading intervention support, is benefiting not only disadvantaged pupils but others in school. While leaders have not yet formally evaluated the use of funding from 2017/18, an initial analysis shows that pupils have made suitable gains in their learning and personal development.

Leaders are consolidating a range of systems for monitoring staff performance and as a result are holding staff better to account. Leaders are continuing to share high expectations of performance. Staff receive support to improve where necessary, but leaders will not shy away from tackling underperformance.

Leaders have further refined their systems for gathering and analysing information about pupils' academic, personal and social development. For example, leaders can now compare the progress pupils are making depending on the length of time they have attended the school, to identify any emerging patterns. As a result, leaders have a much better understanding of the progress pupils are making in the core subjects and the barriers to learning that pupils may be experiencing. They know that they want to develop the use of this information further so that they can target interventions more effectively.

The middle leadership of the school is improving further. Middle leaders say that they feel well supported by senior leaders and have opportunities to work with other staff in the trust to enhance their skills. They also provide effective support to staff. For example, they hold fortnightly meetings to support non-specialist staff in the planning and delivery of English and mathematics. The SENCo has ensured that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have been properly assessed so that they can receive suitable support, matched to their specific needs. As a result, several pupils have now transferred into more appropriate specialist provision.

Leaders' further refinement of the curriculum has led to a more balanced range of subjects that pupils can access. The previous lesson planning structure of 'The Newbridge Way' has been consolidated. Teachers are now much more confident to deliver well-planned lessons within a more flexible curriculum framework. Teachers

are now ensuring that they tailor activities which best reflect the needs of pupils in their charge. Given the transient nature of the education of some pupils, and their differing needs, leaders should consider reviewing their curriculum annually so that they can ensure it continues to meet pupils' specific needs and aspirations.

Currently, science is not taught in school. While academies can define their own curriculum, the school intends to transfer some pupils back into mainstream school at the earliest opportunity. If pupils are not able to access the full range of subjects they are likely to encounter in mainstream, they may not be best prepared for their transition.

Leaders recognise that there is still work to do to engage parents and carers further in the life of the school. During the inspection, no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were received. Leaders are planning social events for parents soon, such as the Macmillan coffee afternoon, aiming to develop positive relationships further.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection because of the helpful support and guidance staff receive from senior and middle leaders. Improvements in the gathering and quality of assessment and progress monitoring has enabled teachers to plan and deliver lessons closely matched to pupils' needs and abilities. As a result, pupils are making better progress, both in engagement and learning.

Inspectors saw positive working relationships between staff and pupils, leading to pupils being better engaged in their learning. Staff have made sure that lessons are purposeful and are based around themes that interest the pupils. Work in lessons allows pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding over time. For example, in a history lesson about the Spanish Armada, pupils were able to reflect on their previous knowledge to give reasons why the conflict was developing.

The presentation of work in books is improving. Work also shows that pupils are being provided with a breadth of more engaging activities. In a mathematics lesson, pupils were keen to challenge themselves further, asking to attempt some GCSE-style questions based on the work they had just completed. In other lessons, however, teachers do not take the opportunity to use questioning as well as they could to deepen pupils' learning.

The member of staff leading the reading intervention programme has now trained all staff in its use. As a result, the programme is being used systematically in every class. Assessment information confirms that pupils are continuing to make strong progress in their reading skills.

Pupils are now participating in well-planned outdoor learning and off-site provision activities at a local college. These opportunities are providing pupils with positive, purposeful learning experiences in areas such as construction and horticulture. Some pupils have now begun volunteering activities in the local community as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Since the last monitoring inspection, leaders, in collaboration with staff, have made significant changes to their approach to managing behaviour. The new 'behaviour and positive relationships' policy is embedded in research and its rationale is clearly understood by staff. As a result, working relationships and pupils' behaviour have improved. Pupils are now reflecting on their behaviour, through the daily reflection and reward time. Incidents and the use of physical interventions have declined. Staff describe the environment as much more 'nurturing'. During the inspection, inspectors saw staff supporting pupils well to manage their behaviour.

Leaders are currently reviewing their anti-bullying policy and systems for the recording and analysis of bullying incidents, to ensure that they complement the revised behaviour policy. Leaders recognise that their current analysis of bullying does not give them accurate enough information for them to act on. However, they are confident that bullying is responded to quickly and dealt with effectively.

Leaders have taken swift action to reduce the high number of part-time timetables being used at the time of the previous inspection. Consequently, only a few pupils have now been placed on a part-time timetable, each with a specific purpose and time limit. Leaders have also revised the length of the school day, and plans are in place for a further extension in the new year.

Pupils' rates of attendance have improved slightly, and leaders continue to focus on improving pupils' attendance as they recognise that it could be better. Leaders follow up pupils' non-attendance at school on the same day, but not always as swiftly as they could.

Leaders have incorporated frequent opportunities into the curriculum to enable pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe. Professionals from different agencies visit the school on a weekly basis to enhance the support for pupils' personal, social and emotional development. Inspectors observed pupils engaging in a meaningful discussion with the local police community support officer about a recent serious incident in the local area. Pupils were able to think about and discuss how they could best keep themselves safe during the late evening, if they had been out with friends.

The beginning of the school day does not provide the best start for some pupils because they are kept waiting outside until doors are unlocked at 9am. As a result, some pupils who arrive early stand on the street, some of them smoking. Staff

report that on occasions, a few pupils who arrive in taxis subsequently abscond from school. This delay in getting pupils into school has a knock-on effect on the school day. Inspectors saw very few pupils engaging in tutorial time at the start of the day because staff were still trying to encourage pupils into school. Governors and leaders are aware of this and have increased supervision at the start of the day. However, this is not effective in solving the wider issue.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders' changes to the curriculum and the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning have resulted in demonstrably improved outcomes for pupils this year. The majority of pupils in Year 11 gained GCSE qualifications in both English and mathematics this year, which is a significant improvement on last year's outcomes. A small number of pupils also gained additional entry level and functional skills qualifications.

Current pupils can now gain accreditations in some foundation subjects. Leaders have thoughtfully built into their programme of accreditation the opportunity for pupils to take examinations at different points in the year. This ensures that pupils will have gained some qualifications even if they leave before the end of the academic year.

In all year groups, pupils are making better progress. There is still some variation in progress in English and mathematics, due to the legacy of weaker teaching. Leaders are aware of this and are addressing the issue through support and monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

In 2018, nearly all pupils moved on to appropriate destinations, such as further education or training. A very small number of pupils are not in education, employment or training. Leaders have already checked to confirm that pupils have taken up places on their new courses. Leaders have planned to make further checks later in the term.

External support

The headteacher continues to be well supported both by the network of headteachers in the trust and the executive headteacher of the trust. The headteacher has begun participating in peer reviews of other schools, enabling him to collaborate with other professionals. These activities ensure that the headteacher has a good understanding of standards in provision in schools other than Newbridge Short Stay School.

Despite assurances by a local authority officer at the last monitoring visit, the local authority has not shared their vision for alternative provision with leaders and governors. As a result, there remains a lack of clarity about the purpose of Newbridge Short Stay School. While the trust has shown tenacity in trying to seek

clarity of purpose from the local authority, the school's position is unclear. Local authority processes for referring pupils to Newbridge Short Stay School are poor. During the inspection, leaders provided compelling evidence that transition information from the local authority for newly referred pupils is almost always sparse or missing altogether. In some cases, missing information related to pupils who had an education, health and care plan, or had been excluded from several different schools, or who had attended other alternative provision. Consequently, leaders' work to ensure that pupils receive the right support they need from the moment they begin attending Newbridge Short Stay School is hampered. Currently, there appear to be no local authority systems in place to promote pupils' return to mainstream schools.