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30 April 2018

Mr Neil Jamieson
Principal
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Dear Mr Jamieson

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Cheadle Academy

Following my visit with Adele Mills, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 18 to 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 last 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 school's statement of action is fit for purpose

the school's improvement plan is fit for purpose

the school may 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 Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that there is rapid improvement in the achievement of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, by ensuring that:
 - leaders systematically evaluate which improvement strategies are effective and which are not, so that the school can move forward quickly
 - governors have the skills and understanding to analyse school performance information independently and so effectively hold leaders to account
 - leaders monitor the quality of teaching rigorously, so that well-focused support can be put in place to tackle any identified underperformance
 - the curriculum meets the needs of pupils and promotes their progress
 - teachers across the school actively promote and develop pupils' understanding and acceptance of fundamental British values
 - teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are reliable and accurate
 - literacy and numeracy catch-up funding has a positive impact on those pupils in Year 7 who need to improve their basic skills.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, make rapid progress from their starting points by ensuring that teachers:
 - use assessment and other information to plan activities that are well matched to pupils' needs
 - have consistently high expectations of pupils' progress and what they can achieve
 - plan activities and use resources that engage pupils and move their learning forward.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons and around school by ensuring that:
 - leaders establish a culture of safeguarding that permeates all the school's work
 - all staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and consistently apply the school's behaviour policy
 - teachers manage pupils' challenging behaviour by consistently applying the school's behaviour policy.
- Urgently improve attendance, especially of disadvantaged pupils, by fostering strong relationships with parents, to involve them in the process of getting

their children to attend school regularly.

An external review of governance 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 to 19 April 2018

Evidence

Inspectors assessed the impact of leaders' actions taken since the last inspection, with particular focus on the areas for improvement relating to leadership and management, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare and outcomes. The impact of relocating post-16 provision to the school site was also considered.

Meetings were held with the principal, the vice-principals, other leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with six governors, including the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body. He also had a telephone conversation with an external consultant and a local leader of education from the Chimney House Teaching School Alliance.

Inspectors observed behaviour during social time and in lessons and formal and informal discussions took place between inspectors and pupils. Inspectors made short visits, with senior leaders, to a range of lessons in every key stage. During these visits, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school improvement plan and self-evaluation and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Information about safeguarding and records of pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and welfare were also analysed.

The school leader who has overall responsibility for the use of pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding was absent during this inspection so the use of additional funding will be a focus of the next visit.

Context

Since the last inspection, a new vice-principal; a senior leader with responsibility for behaviour and attendance; leaders of modern foreign languages (MFL) and science; a deputy leader of English; a part-time teacher of product design; three members of support staff and three governors have joined the school.

A senior leader with responsibility for behaviour and attendance; a leader of MFL; deputy leaders of English and mathematics; a teacher of science; two teachers of physical education (PE); a teacher of food technology; three behaviour and learning practitioners and a receptionist have left the school.

Four members of staff were absent during the inspection.

In September 2017, sixth-form provision for pupils from the Cheadle Academy

moved from the Moorlands Sixth Form College to the school site.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and managers are using their clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to inform effective action towards the removal of special measures. The school's improvement plan builds upon the statement of action, which was judged to be fit for purpose in May 2017. The actions within the current plan are relevant, clear and specific. They are set within a logical and appropriate time frame and the people responsible for leading and taking actions are identified. Resources, monitoring and evaluation processes and success criteria are all identified but leaders have not yet placed enough emphasis on fully assessing the impact of their strategies in order to inform further actions. They still do not systematically evaluate the impact of their actions in order to improve the school further.

The recommended review of governance took place in October 2017. It highlighted many strengths and some areas for development and concluded:

'This is a hard working governing body which has a good understanding of its role in providing strategic leadership and in holding the school leadership to account. It undertakes regular self-evaluation and has clearly identified its own next steps for development. It... is well positioned to continue to move the academy forward in its journey out of special measures.'

Governance has certainly improved since the time of the last inspection. Governors have benefited from good-quality training from external consultants that has helped them address their relative weaknesses. They have a range of skills and experience to offer appropriate support and challenge. For example, members of the governing body are able to analyse school performance information independently so they can hold leaders to closer account.

Senior and middle leadership has also been strengthened since the time of the last inspection. However, not all middle leaders are taking effective action to secure the required improvements in their areas of responsibility. Senior leaders are aware that all subject leaders need to ensure that the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make match that evident in the most effective departments.

There is a strong sense of community in the school. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and teachers across the school actively promote and develop pupils' understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including trips and visits and many have taken part in the National Citizenship Service and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and promotes improved progress in a

range of subjects. As leaders monitor the quality of teaching more rigorously, they have put well-focused support in place to tackle underperformance. However, this is yet to have a marked impact in improving the quality of teaching and helping pupils make more rapid progress in some subject areas. Actions taken by leaders are yet to have a full impact on pupils' outcomes.

Leaders have established a culture of safeguarding that permeates all aspects of the school's work. Staff are well trained and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Robust systems are in place and the single central record meets requirements. Pupils feel safe, as poor behaviour is now rare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving but inconsistencies remain. Most staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and professional development opportunities are having a positive impact on improving teaching. There is some high-quality practice in a number of subject areas, including art, history and English.

Where teaching is most effective, it is carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils with different starting points. Resources and interesting activities are used well to engage pupils and move learning on. Feedback and carefully targeted questioning are also used effectively to further pupils' learning.

Staff know the pupils well. They use their secure subject knowledge and positive relationships to help pupils make progress. Pupils usually behave well in class and work well together. They are willing to participate in a range of activities and often write well. However, the way that pupils present their work varies between subjects. Presentation in mathematics and science is not as good as that seen in other subjects and boys, disadvantaged pupils and low-prior-attaining pupils do not consistently present their work well.

Pupils in the nurture group benefit from good-quality support and effective teaching that allows them to make improved progress. Many teaching assistants have a positive impact on the pupils that they support but, although it is improving, the quality of the work of this group of staff is inconsistent.

Where teaching is less effective, staff do not have high enough expectations of the pupils. Consequently, the work that they set lacks challenge as staff do not use the assessment information that is available to them to plan effectively. Too often, time is not used productively as pupils are not given opportunities to work independently, reflect on what they have learned, address misconceptions, redraft work and think deeply about their studies. Some pupils become passively disengaged when teachers spend a great deal of time introducing activities.

Pupils have gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding as a result of poor

teaching in the past. The teaching of science has been weak over time and there are still inconsistencies in other subject areas. For example, staff do not use the school's marking policy consistently well in order to ensure that all pupils know what to do to improve their work.

Leaders have taken action to ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are reliable and accurate in most subjects. As a result of moderation taking place in the school and with other schools, the consistency of teachers' assessment is improving. However, leaders are aware that this process needs to be refined in key stage 3 PE.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Behaviour has improved markedly since the time of the last inspection. The consistent application of the behaviour policy has contributed to this. Staff have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils understand the consequences of their actions. The rewards system is also valued by pupils.

As a result of improved behaviour management by staff, incidents of inappropriate behaviour have declined, individuals who have found it more difficult to manage their own behaviour have improved their conduct and exclusions are below the national average.

The importance of regular attendance now has a much higher profile in the school. Almost all groups of pupils have better attendance than at the time of the last inspection, but absence and persistent absence remain higher than the national averages. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still too low.

Leaders collect a great deal of information about attendance and behaviour. However, they do not systematically analyse it to look for trends to inform further action. Leaders are aware that this process needs to be developed further.

Outcomes for pupils

The 2017 key stage 4 examination results indicated that pupils in last year's Year 11 had made broadly average progress. Progress in humanities and MFL had improved and pupils made better progress in English than in mathematics. Many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and middle- and high-prior-attaining pupils made good progress in vocational subjects. Middle- and low-prior-attaining pupils attained similar outcomes to the national average for these groups.

However, the most able pupils attained less well than the national average for pupils with similar starting points, boys attained less than girls and the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher grades in English and mathematics was below the national average. Progress in mathematics was slower than the national average, particularly for middle-prior-attaining pupils. The most able pupils made

slower progress than average in English and progress in science was very slow.

Disadvantaged pupils attained less well than other pupils and they made slower progress than others in a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, MFL and humanities. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities made slower progress than other pupils with similar starting points.

Current pupils are making improved progress, but weaknesses in science remain and progress in mathematics is slower than in English. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are still not making fast enough progress.

16 to 19 study programmes

Sixth-form provision has been successfully transferred to the school site. It is well led and managed and, as a result of the quality of teaching, current students are making strong progress.

Sixth-form students are role models to younger pupils and they are helping to raise aspirations. They are interested and engaged in their studies and use the facilities well.

External support

School leaders receive good-quality support from particular external consultants. Their company has provided development opportunities for leaders at all levels and supported the improvements made in behaviour management, teaching, learning and assessment and governance. They are also providing support to improve science. The consultants challenge leaders on the progress that they have made towards the removal of special measures and produce accurate and useful reports which highlight strengths, weaknesses and clear next steps.

School leaders have also received support from a local leader of education from the Chimney House Teaching School Alliance. She has provided additional support for governors and worked with the mathematics department in order to improve practice.