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Mrs Gemma Simon
Principal
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Normanby Road
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Dear Mrs Simon

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hillsview Academy

Following my visit with John Downs, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 7–8 November 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 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 not 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 board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Redcar and Cleveland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Leaders and governors should take action to rapidly improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing and strengthening leadership at all levels so that all leaders are effectively evaluating the success of their actions to improve outcomes for pupils
 - monitoring and evaluating the use of additional funds for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need to catch up so that spending is precisely targeted and improves outcomes for these pupils.

- Leaders and governors should improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by:
 - ensuring that teachers have the highest expectations of what all pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons carefully to meet the needs of all pupils, so that all pupils make good progress from their starting points
 - improving and embedding the new behaviour system so that it is applied consistently by all teachers and disruption to learning rapidly reduces
 - implementing an effective whole-school literacy strategy so that pupils improve their spelling, punctuation, reading and extended writing.

- Leaders and governors should urgently improve attendance, behaviour and pupil welfare by:
 - eradicating internal truancy and preventing pupils from smoking on site
 - reducing the number of behaviour incidents and fixed-term exclusions
 - reducing persistent absence and improving attendance for all groups of pupils, particularly for those who are disadvantaged, and for students in the sixth form
 - improving the quality of the provision for personal, social, health and economic education so that all pupils in the school and students in the sixth form receive education to prepare them for their futures.

- Leaders and governors should take urgent action to ensure that safeguarding is effective by:
 - ensuring that records of bullying, attendance issues and referrals are detailed and reference action taken and associated impact

- ensuring that pupils move safely around the building without running, pushing or shoving.

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 pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 7 November 2018 to 08 November 2018

Evidence

Inspectors met with the principal and other members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with a group of middle leaders and a group of staff. Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils from all year groups and talked to pupils in lessons, during breaktimes and at lunchtimes. Inspectors visited a number of lessons covering a range of subjects. Some lesson visits were conducted with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books in classrooms and with senior leaders. A telephone conversation was held with the chair of the governing board and a meeting was held with another member of the governing board. A telephone conversation was held with the national director of secondary schools for the Academies Enterprise Trust and the chief executive officer. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation. An inspector met with a group of parents. A telephone call was held with an alternative education provider used by the school to provide education for a small number of pupils for part of the week.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in June 2018, four middle leaders have become associate members of the senior leadership team to provide additional capacity. New teachers have been appointed in history, geography, mathematics and drama. A cover manager, isolation room manager and cover supervisor are now in post. An attendance officer and administrator have also been appointed. The school is fully staffed. A system leader from the trust supports in the school for two and a half days per week to provide additional senior leadership capacity.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The overwhelming majority of staff, pupils and parents who talked to inspectors during the monitoring visit are unequivocal in their view that the principal is making a positive difference. Staff are behind the principal's vision and her determination to improve the quality of provision for all pupils. However, since the last monitoring visit the rate of improvement has not been quick enough, particularly in improving the quality of teaching and learning further. Leaders have identified the main priorities for improvement. However, there is still a significant amount of work to do towards the removal of special measures.

The funding to support disadvantaged pupils had limited impact on improving the attendance and outcomes of disadvantaged pupils last academic year. Leaders have produced a fully costed plan for the use of additional funding. Governors now ensure that leaders are being held to account for the use of this funding. However, as this plan has only recently been introduced, it is too early to judge the impact.

Leaders and governors are aware of the need to accelerate the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and significantly improve their attendance.

The special education needs coordinator ensures that the views of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are sought when deciding on individual targets to support their needs. However, some targets on SEND support plans are still not precise enough. Leaders have recently established The Haven. This is an area within the school where pupils can receive additional support in a nurturing environment. Parents speak positively about the support provided in The Haven. However, despite the work of leaders to improve provision for pupils with SEND, the proportion of this group of pupils excluded from school remains unacceptably high.

Leaders continue to ensure that pupil welfare records are detailed, with follow-up actions recorded. The school continues to work with a range of agencies to support pupils and families when required. Weekly staff briefings ensure that safeguarding training for staff is kept up to date. Staff are clear about what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns about pupils.

Middle leaders are held to account for the quality of provision in their subject areas. They have developed systems to check on the impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils. However, some middle leaders have an overly generous view of the quality of teaching. Some do not ensure that expectations of pupils are high or that school policies are consistently applied. When middle leaders do set higher standards, the quality of teaching is improving. For example, the head of mathematics has implemented a clear policy for expectations of pupils' presentation in mathematics. Consequently, pupils' presentation in mathematics is better than in other subjects.

While new staff report that they feel well-supported by leaders, it is recommended that the school does not appoint any more newly qualified teachers at this time. This will be reviewed at the next monitoring visit.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Although the quality of teaching was beginning to show signs of improvement at the last monitoring visit, leaders have not ensured that the pace of improvement has been maintained. In subjects where middle leaders are setting higher expectations, for example in mathematics, teaching is improving compared to previous monitoring visits. However, in other subjects, such as science, the quality of teaching has not improved significantly enough. Senior leaders do not ensure that their expectations of the quality of teaching are embedded in everyday practice. The quality of teaching in some subjects remains too variable and improvements seen at the last monitoring visit are fragile.

Improving pupils' literacy skills remains a high priority for the school. The school's literacy policy is being inconsistently applied. Although there is more evidence of teachers providing opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills, pupils' basic spelling, punctuation and grammar errors are not being routinely addressed by teachers. Pupils' literacy continues to remain a barrier to their learning and progress. This key issue is not being addressed quickly enough.

Pupils bring the necessary equipment to school. However, the presentation of their written work remains too variable across the school. Staff are not ensuring that the school's presentation policy is consistently applied.

During lesson visits, inspectors observed some teachers implementing the school's behaviour policy. Pupils, staff and parents told inspectors that behaviour is better and that the principal is setting higher standards for behaviour. However, the behaviour policy is still not being implemented consistently by all staff.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Compared to previous monitoring visits an increasing number of pupils told inspectors that they are proud of their school. Expectations for the wearing of uniforms have been raised further. As a result, pupils look smart in school.

Inspectors agree with leaders and governors that pupils' behaviour in corridors is now much calmer. There is good staff presence in corridors, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes, to address any issues quickly.

Parents talk positively about better communication between home and school since the appointment of the principal, including being able to view a record of their child's rewards and any behaviour incidents online.

Incidents of internal truancy remain markedly lower than at the previous section 5 inspection. A high staff presence around the school ensures that any potential truancy is addressed quickly. Consistent implementation of the school's punctuality policy means that the number of pupils who arrive late to school continues to decline.

Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is getting better. However, they did say that there is still work to do to improve behaviour further. For example, different groups of pupils told inspectors that they still hear inappropriate language frequently.

Work in pupils' books shows that there continues to be gaps in pupils' learning due to their absence. Pupils are often slow to start their work and, as a result, work remains incomplete. Leaders agree that there is work to do with pupils in Year 7 and Year 9, in particular, to improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Due to an increasing focus on improving attendance, rates of absence have declined since the last monitoring visit. Attendance is beginning to improve from a low baseline. Pupils and parents are positive about the attendance rewards. A system leader from the trust is working with the assistant principal in charge of attendance to address historically high rates of absence. Better monitoring systems and work to raise awareness of the importance of attendance with pupils and parents are beginning to show some impact. However, pupils' attendance still remains too low and the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school remains too high. High numbers of fixed-term exclusions continue to have a detrimental effect on attendance figures.

There has been some reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions since the last monitoring visit. However, there were 140 incidences of fixed-term exclusions in first half of the autumn term. Although this is a lower number when compared to the same point last year, leaders, governors and the trust acknowledge that fixed-term exclusions remain unacceptably high and need to reduce more rapidly, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. The number of pupils permanently excluded from school also remains high and is well above the national average.

Pupils told inspectors that staff are dealing with any issues of bullying more promptly. Raised awareness of the effects of bullying, together with more effective recording and monitoring, is ensuring that incidents of bullying continue to decline. Systems are in place to alert senior staff to any online bullying or safeguarding issues when pupils are using the school computers.

Most pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. However, some pupils told inspectors that they do not feel safe when using the girls' toilets, where a large number of pupils can congregate at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Additionally, some pupils told inspectors that there are some areas on the way to school where they do not always feel safe on their journey. These issues were communicated to leaders during the monitoring inspection. Leaders are working with the school's local community police officers to address any concerns within the local community.

The headteacher has recently established a student council. Pupils who are student ambassadors talk with enthusiasm about the potential to work with senior leaders on projects that they feel are important to help improve the school. For example, pupils from the student council want to raise the profile of diversity and the importance of showing respect and tolerance for people with different beliefs. They are also keen to raise the profile of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues, so that all pupils feel accepted, no matter what their sexual orientation.

Since the last monitoring inspection, leaders have increased the amount of time available to deliver the school's personal, social, health and economic education programme to enable more opportunities for pupils to discuss and explore issues and topics. For example, pupils spoke to an inspector about the recent work they

have done to increase their understanding of different cultures. The school has a comprehensive careers programme to help prepare pupils for their next steps in employment, training or education.

Outcomes for pupils

Provisional GCSE outcomes indicate that last year's Year 11 pupils made poor progress over time. Outcomes were inadequate. Disadvantaged pupils made particularly poor progress across their GCSE subjects. Leaders had anticipated that outcomes would not improve for Year 11 pupils due to a legacy of poor-quality teaching. However, pupils' outcomes were worse than expected for all groups of pupils. The progress made by pupils was significantly below the national average.

Current Year 11 pupils are making better progress. For example, most-able pupils are making stronger progress in English. This is due to higher expectations of most-able pupils' writing. However, pupils' progress is still being hampered by an inconsistent approach to the teaching of literacy across the school.

Gaps in pupils' learning remain due to absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders agree that the quality of teaching needs to improve more swiftly to ensure that pupils make better progress across the curriculum.

The very small number of pupils in Year 13 made progress in their vocational and A-level courses which was in line with students with similar starting points nationally. Year 13 pupils spoke positively about the support they receive from their teachers on their vocational course.

External support

Another multi-academy trust provided additional support for Year 11 pupils in English, mathematics and science last academic year. However, outcomes for Year 11 pupils did not improve. The same multi-academy trust is providing support for teachers in English, mathematics and science this year. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this support on improving the quality of teaching and learning.