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Ms Dawn Coombes
Headteacher
Wakefield Pathways School
Poplar Avenue
Townville
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West Yorkshire
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Dear Ms Coombes

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wakefield Pathways School

Following my visit to your school on 25 February 2015, 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 which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, a teacher with responsibility for teaching and learning, the school's business manager, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the executive headteacher and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the action plan prepared jointly by the local authority and the school were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection, the local authority has appointed an experienced executive headteacher to support the school for two days per week. An interim executive board has recently been appointed, but has yet to meet. A teacher has taken on responsibility for leading improvements to teaching and learning. One teacher retired and another left the school at the end of the autumn term 2014.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

After the inspection, the headteacher took immediate action to improve safeguarding. Staff training to heighten awareness of risks has been followed by a review of health and safety in every class. With the help of the local authority, more detailed risk assessments of learning activities have been completed, although the headteacher and officers recognise that in some instances these lack the specific information needed to make them as effective as possible. The recording and analysis of incidents and risks has been tightened up. For example, a 'near-miss' log has been introduced and 'cause for concern' forms now include more detailed information. Helpfully, an electronic recording and analysis system is being introduced to facilitate the speedy analysis of trends in incidents.

Improving teaching has been a key focus of the school's work this term. A programme of coaching for teachers, drawing on expertise from local special schools, has just begun. A new, more detailed lesson-planning format was introduced at the beginning of term to help improve the match of work to pupils' individual needs. Weekly monitoring of the planning and pupils' work is thorough and follows up week on week on areas identified for development. Workbooks for pupils have been introduced so that the progress they are making is captured. A well-considered proforma for annotating pupils' work has also been introduced and staff have had training on the use of this. Books seen during the inspection indicate that there is some good practice in the school in this aspect of assessment.

A new curriculum with a strong emphasis on basic skills, and based on the new National Curriculum, is at the early stages of development. Sensibly, leaders are beginning by planning for literacy, numeracy and science, incorporating provision for pupils' communication needs. As part of planned improvements to pupils' reading, a daily phonics (the sounds that letters make) session has been introduced, where appropriate.

The recent appointment of an interim executive board has overtaken the need for a review of governance. The board will look at the school's use of pupil premium funding (additional government money) once it begins work.

The local authority is providing considerable, timely and expert assistance to the school. Officers provided immediate support for safeguarding, health and safety and the school continues to draw on expertise in these areas, benefiting from regular audits. Recognising the school's limited leadership capacity, the local authority has recently commissioned an executive headteacher whose role is yet to be defined. The local authority is providing two advisers, one independent to support the school

and an officer to challenge the school and ensure that support is effective. The local authority has facilitated support for teaching and learning from a number of local special schools. It is also providing expert help to improve the learning environment for the youngest children.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The joint action plan prepared by the local authority and school is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Corporate Director for Children and Young People, Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin

Her Majesty's Inspector