

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Ms Dawn Coombes  
Headteacher  
Wakefield Pathways School  
Poplar Avenue  
Townville  
Castleford  
West Yorkshire  
WF10 3QJ

Dear Ms Coombes

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Wakefield Pathways School**

Following my visit to your school on 8–9 March 2016, 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 November 2014. 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 may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Corporate Director for Children and Young People for the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2014.**

- Take urgent steps to secure pupils' safety in all key stages, by:
  - improving the frequency and rigour of health and safety checks on the premises so that potential risks are swiftly identified and reported and urgent action taken to address them
  - providing staff training so that all staff are clear about what is needed to keep pupils safe both inside and outside the classroom
  - making sure that staff and leaders consistently refer to risk assessments, which identify the needs of each pupil when planning learning activities
  - improving the written records relating to safeguarding incidents so that they are clear and detailed enough and stored in a manner that can be used in order to prevent re-occurrence.
  
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching throughout the school so that it is at least good, in order to improve achievement in reading, writing and mathematics for all groups of pupils in all key stages, so that they can make good or better progress, by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
  - ensuring that information about what pupils know and can do is used effectively to provide activities that challenge pupils of all abilities to reach their potential, especially the most able
  - providing training for staff so that the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are taught consistently well in all classes
  - increasing opportunities in classrooms for pupils to practise and develop their reading skills and to encourage reading for pleasure
  - making sure that all teachers provide clear direction to teaching assistants and that they more actively support pupils' learning in the classroom
  - planning work which pupils find interesting and challenging in order to hold their attention and ensure that their behaviour and attitudes to learning are consistently good
  - supporting pupils to become more inquisitive learners by extending the range of learning activities and improving the quality of resources and the learning environment.
  
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so that the school has the ability to improve quickly, by:
  - developing the roles of the assistant headteachers so they are fully involved and equipped with the skills they need to check the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, so that teaching and pupils' achievement improve at a faster rate

- ensuring that governors have the skills and knowledge to hold senior leaders rigorously to account for quickly improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, and that the school's work to ensure pupils are kept safe and secure is effective
- ensuring all staff share in the aspirational vision for the school's future and that staff are motivated to do so
- improving pupils' understanding of life in modern British society.

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 can be improved.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 March 2016**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, including a number of lessons seen jointly with the headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher. She scrutinised a range of documents, including some concerned with keeping pupils safe, and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the business manager and the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB). She spoke by telephone to the local authority's adviser for the school and the consultant improvement partner.

### **Context**

Two new teachers took up permanent appointments at the beginning of the term. One teacher is absent long-term due to ill health. An experienced school leader is supporting the school part-time as acting deputy headteacher. Following a consultation process, the amalgamation with Kingsland School has been agreed to take place from September 2016. In preparation for this, some refurbishment of the school building has begun.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The school's leadership capacity has increased and the pace of improvement has accelerated since the previous monitoring inspection. The support of a deputy headteacher, combined with the return of an assistant headteacher following ill-health absence, has allowed the responsibilities for the day-to-day running of the school to be distributed effectively. It has also enabled the systems for monitoring the quality of lesson planning and pupils' work to be restored to full operation. The headteacher has revised the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders in the light of this additional capacity. Among a range of responsibilities, the deputy headteacher is having some success in developing links with local schools and the community, and is planning events aimed at extending pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain.

The headteacher has taken well-considered steps to strengthen the school's leadership capacity at middle level. Three temporary posts have been created during the year with clear briefs to develop literacy and phonics, the creative curriculum and the learning environment. Several middle leaders have been given the opportunity to gain a national qualification in leadership. Increasingly, the headteacher is including middle leaders in senior leadership meetings so that they are able to develop their understanding and contribute to strategic decisions. Middle leaders have prepared action plans for their areas of responsibility: these show how their work contributes directly to the school's overall improvement. Where the work of these middle leaders is most established, the benefits are evident. For example, there is now a systematic approach to the delivery of phonics across the school.

The school's capacity for improvement has also been enhanced by the recruitment of new teachers. This has reduced the need for supply teachers and increased the consistency with which the school's systems are implemented. The headteacher has made well-considered changes to staffing in some classes in response to pupils' needs.

Systems to safeguard pupils are fully in place. Leaders responded rapidly and appropriately to a small number of recent 'near misses'. The business manager continues to lead regular health and safety reviews. Following a discussion in the school council, a Year 6 pupil contributed to the most recent review, bringing a different perspective to the process. The list of actions required following the review was short and quickly accomplished.

The IEB is very well informed about the school's progress. In addition to reports from the headteacher, members participate in the local authority's regular review and challenge process. IEB members select a different focus for each review to gain a widening picture of the school's performance. The Chair is working with the governing body of Kingsland School to make the amalgamation process as efficient and positive as possible.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching has improved this term, not least because staffing is more stable: fewer classes are taught by temporary teachers. There is a calm, productive working atmosphere throughout the school. Regular monitoring of teachers' planning, together with pupils' work, is helping to increase the consistency with which the school's systems to secure progression and accurate assessments are implemented. For instance, checks are made to ensure that sufficient evidence of pupils' progress is annotated effectively to show what has been learned and how much support pupils required to achieve this.

There were a number of positive features of the lessons observed, such as practical activities that demonstrated the learning directly. For instance, in a literacy session on instructions, pupils had to follow a set of instructions in order to create a picture using their own hand prints. Adults consistently model courteous communication with pupils, making eye contact and using signing when appropriate. Pupils' independence is fostered and they are encouraged to use appropriate techniques to manage their own behaviour. Often teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the management of behaviour so that pupils are able to participate in tasks and so make gains in their learning. Where learning in lessons was less successful, tasks did not build up pupils' understanding step by step; activities were not pitched at the right level; and the resources selected were not well matched to purpose of the activity.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

The recently revised behaviour management policy has resulted in greater consistency in the way staff respond to pupils' conduct. Pupils understand the escalation of sanctions, represented by traffic lights displayed in each classroom.

Some are keen not to move towards the red light. They also know that each day brings a fresh start. Built into the system are opportunities for time out and removal to a safe space, which are working effectively. Although there was a decrease in the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour in the autumn term, compared with the same period in the previous year, this improving trend has not been maintained in the spring term. However, since behaviour incidents are analysed regularly and trends identified in, for instance, location and time of day, leaders know why this is the case. The headteacher has taken suitable steps to manage this, including rearranging the staffing and make-up of some classes.

Last term a system for monitoring pupils' social development was trialled. This has not proved as manageable and effective as anticipated so alternative approaches are under consideration.

Compared with the same period last year, attendance has risen. It remains a little below the school's target.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The school's assessment information shows that there are improvements in pupils' progress. A greater proportion are making the expected, or more than the expected, rate of progress in English, mathematics and science. In some instances, pupils are making much more than the expected rate of progress because teaching and the curriculum meet their needs more closely than in the past. However, where teaching is less frequently and securely matched to pupils' needs, improvements in pupils' progress are too variable.

A number of initiatives are contributing to improvements in pupils' learning. There is a sharper focus on developing skills for reading. Daily phonics sessions are carefully targeted, with pupils working in ability rather than class groups. Successful sessions are very well planned to build up pupils' knowledge through a series of games and fun-filled activities. All pupils read with an adult every day and records are kept of this and their progress in phonics. The record books include helpful prompts about the skills pupils are working on. Parents are encouraged to read with their children. The school library has been revamped recently and now has a welcoming, homely feel. The books are carefully selected so that the main focus is on topics pupils are currently learning about in their classes. Increasingly, pupils are visiting the local public library which is a short walk from the school.

Brisk progress has been made in reviewing the policy and curriculum for mathematics: schemes of work are now more detailed. These reflect national requirements for both the early years and the new National Curriculum. The recently appointed subject leader has carried out a subject audit to ascertain the support staff would like and where more resources are required.

## **External support**

The local authority holds the headteacher and IEB to account for the school's progress. As well as regular meetings, the local authority's inspector and the school's consultant improvement adviser conduct termly reviews. These provide a well-gauged measure of the school's progress and are helpful in identifying some immediate actions for improvement. The support of the local authority's inspector has been well received by new middle leaders as they plan for their responsibilities. This is also true for the IEB, who requested an external view of the quality of the learning environment, in order to accelerate improvements where possible.

The local authority is making a considerable investment in improvements to the school building and facilities.