

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr J Wirth
Headteacher
Ecclesfield School
Chapelton Road
Ecclesfield
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S35 9WD

Dear Mr Wirth

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ecclesfield School

Following my visit with Rebekah Taylor and Natasha Greenough, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 4 and 5 October 2017, 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 recent 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 January 2017.

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.

The school's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Significantly improve the effectiveness of senior leadership and governance so that the achievement of pupils is at least good by:
 - ensuring that all leaders establish an accurate view of the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and pupils' attitudes to learning and use this to plan precisely for improvement
 - using the pupil premium funding much more effectively to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils
 - developing the skills of governors so that they hold senior leaders rigorously to account for the performance of all pupils at the school.
- Act urgently to improve the quality of teaching in all subjects, but particularly in science, so that it is at least good and ensures that all pupils make good or better progress in their time at the school, by:
 - continuing to develop the effectiveness of subject leaders in overcoming the impact on pupils' achievement of a legacy of weak teaching over time
 - raising teachers' expectations of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the most able pupils, so that teachers consistently provide challenging and engaging activities in lessons and homework
 - consistently developing pupils' numeracy skills and the quality of their extended writing across all subjects.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning by:
 - ensuring that all staff deal consistently and robustly with poor behaviour, both within and outside the classroom
 - making sure, through the strengthening of teaching, that all pupils are engaged in their learning and are motivated to succeed.

An external review of pupil premium spending should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

An external review of the school governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 4 October 2017 to 5 October 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils and governors, including the chair of the governing body. A meeting was held with a representative of the Minerva Trust at their request. On this first monitoring inspection, the focus was to establish the impact of leaders and managers on work to begin improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Context

Since the school was inspected in January 2017, relatively little change has taken place to staffing or the number of pupils on roll. An external consultant, recruited in February 2017, currently provides leadership of the science department. Four temporary associate assistant headteachers have joined the senior leadership team on 1 September 2017 following a recent restructure. All have been appointed from within the school. The school is being re-brokered and is due to join the Minerva Trust on 1 November 2017.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors were disappointed with the outcome of the previous inspection. They have responded to it by commissioning external reviews of the school's work and introducing changes to systems and initiating activities. However, the clear messages from that inspection have not been taken on board fully. At the highest levels, leaders and governors have not acted swiftly enough to establish a credible strategic plan to guide the school's development and improvement. The statement of action underestimates the importance of the task to improve the quality of teaching and how this impacts on all aspects of school life. Timescales to complete the actions within the improvement plan have either passed or are very quickly approaching. Senior and middle leaders consistently confirmed to inspectors that, although work is taking place, it was incomplete.

Leaders and governors have not utilised the help available to them to best effect. For example, they have not acted upon the advice they received from HMI, in April 2017, regarding what is needed to ensure that the current plan is fit for purpose. The school commissioned considerable external reviews and consultant support to assist them in improving the quality of education and governance. The consultants offered sensible suggestions to improve. However, leaders have been slow to act and implement the ideas.

During this inspection, governors identified that although many actions in the plan have been completed, including external reviews of governance and pupil premium

funding, they do not have the evidence to show the difference this has made. This is because the emphasis has not been placed on actions that will make a difference to pupils' achievement or the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Governors do not routinely evaluate the impact of leaders' actions within the improvement plan. The present plan ends in November 2017 and leaders have not been proactive in identifying the next steps. They are waiting for a new trust to direct them. Governors acknowledge that they have been distracted from their key role by the priority they have given to identifying a trust sponsor and conserving the school's financial position.

Newly promoted senior leaders are still getting to grips with their roles. Consequently, the school's plans to improve the support and challenge for key groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are at an early stage. The school is working to implement the special educational needs code of practice more securely. Not all pupils are aware that they are on the special educational needs register or the reasons for it. The school must take urgent action to ensure that pupils and parents are informed. Changes to practice so that teachers take responsibility to structure work to meet pupils' needs, and changes to systems for securing support and advice, are at an early stage. This is reflected in pupils' views; most pupils who have special educational needs say that little has changed for them since the previous inspection.

The pace of development has quickened since September. Middle leaders are putting in place procedures to monitor the work of their departments. They feel they are increasingly held to account for their actions. Additional leadership roles have been created with a specific focus on improving teaching and learning in each subject area. Considerable documentation, some of which is of high quality, has been disseminated to subject leaders to help them analyse information and to support disadvantaged pupils. This work is at an early stage.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders have introduced quicker fixes, particularly since September, to help create consistency in the approach to teaching and learning. School standards based on challenge, pupil response, questioning and attitudes to learning and behaviour provide a framework for teachers and set out minimum expectations of teaching. Monitoring by senior leaders and middle leaders has focused on compliance with the features being present in lessons rather than a common understanding of the quality and progression in learning. Most leaders recognised, through discussions during the inspection, that this was the next step as they move forward to develop subject plans and revise the curriculum to make progression in knowledge and skills clearer.

Whole-school training for teachers in using the standards has been minimal although steps are beginning to be taken to share practice within departmental

teams. Wider training and development opportunities have been limited. The school's focus on disadvantaged pupils has yet to materialise in teaching because training for teachers has not been disseminated consistently.

Pupils are receiving more feedback about their strengths and weaknesses. However, teachers are not always using the information from their checks on pupils' books to inform their planning. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to put the feedback into practice. Inaccuracies are left unchecked in some books and misconceptions remain unchallenged.

Teachers have access to more information about the pupils in their classes and their achievement. In Year 11, teachers are using this information skilfully in their planning to adapt tasks to meet pupils' needs. For example, in mathematics, most-able pupils are responding to greater challenge in their learning and pupils who are struggling are identified and provided with the support they need. However, the information is not used consistently within and across subjects. This inconsistency is reflected in a lack of challenge that slows the rate of progress for most-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

A focus on practical experiments in science, together with higher expectations of behaviour, is helping to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. The changes are having greater impact in Year 8. Pupils' enjoyment and increased understanding of science topics were clearly evident in some lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Expectations of behaviour in lessons and around school are clear and are being applied more consistently than at the previous inspection. Many pupils are of the view that, 'In lessons it's stricter now.' In the vast majority of lessons, pupils are focused on their work and comply with teachers' requests. Senior leaders are visible around school, greeting pupils on their arrival, celebrating pupils' achievements and attendance and reinforcing the expectations of uniform. The consequences of misbehaviour are also clearer. A more systematic approach to using detentions and tackling poor behaviour is evident in the school. As a result, exclusion rates are reducing and there is a significant reduction in the most serious incidents.

Outcomes for pupils

Many pupils are working below expectations, due to a legacy of underachievement. Pupils' achievement in science continues to lag behind that of most other subjects.

National changes to GCSE examinations in 2017 mean that the unvalidated Year 11 results cannot be compared directly to those of pupils in 2016. However, the school's own analysis of the 2017 GCSE results suggests an improvement. The school's provision of intensive additional support outside lessons helped to support

pupils' revision. The school's information suggests pupils, particularly the most able pupils, made stronger gains in mathematics than in English. Leaders welcome pupils' achievement in science, but also recognise that their achievement remains below the school's expectations and standards nationally.

Gaps in the progress of disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 show positive signs of narrowing in response to support tailored to individuals' needs. However, this is not reflected across Years 7 to 10, where outcomes rely on timetabled teaching rather than intensive support.

External support

The school currently has no formal arrangements for external support to be provided from good or outstanding schools. Arrangements for the school to join a trust are under way.