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30 November 2016

Mrs Gill Kelly
Interim Executive Principal
The Lincolnshire Teaching and Learning Centre
Smith Street
Lincoln
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Dear Mrs Kelly

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Lincolnshire Teaching and Learning Centre

Following my visit with Caroline Oliver, Ofsted Inspector, Janis Warren, Ofsted Inspector and John Savage, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 1–2 November 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 which have been taken since the centre's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fifth monitoring inspection since the centre became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement which 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clare Cossor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2015

- As a matter of urgency, make all sites of the provision safe for pupils by making sure that:
 - full safety audits and fire-risk assessments are completed on each site, and that shortcomings are acted upon immediately
 - there are robust procedures for checking the safety of pupils accessing sites of alternative provision
 - recruitment processes are compliant with the latest statutory guidance, and are implemented rigorously
 - all staff, including temporary staff, undergo suitable induction procedures
 - sanctions for poor behaviour are appropriate, and are in line with statutory guidance
 - pupils are appropriately supervised at all times to ensure that their behaviour is managed effectively, and to secure their own safety and that of others.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - there is agreement between the headteacher, the management committee and the local authority about the school's status and that this is then communicated to all stakeholders
 - the management committee is correctly constituted and implements its statutory duties
 - leaders provide the management committee with the information it needs to fulfil its statutory duties and to hold leaders to account
 - all the required statutory policies are devised by leaders, approved by the management committee and implemented across all sites
 - pupils' achievement can be more easily compared with the national picture through developing an appropriate data system
 - data about pupils' behaviour is presented in a clear, simple format so that it can be analysed more effectively by leaders to support improvement
 - disadvantaged pupils benefit from the funding they are entitled to in order to help improve their achievement
 - leaders at all levels establish an accurate view about the quality of provision through the development of effective systems of self-evaluation.
- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' achievement by

making sure that:

- information about the progress pupils make, and the standards they achieve, is accurate
- teachers' marking consistently helps pupils to identify the next steps of learning and that teachers' comments are acted upon by pupils
- suitably skilled and adequately trained staff are deployed to support pupils' learning
- the most able pupils are given work that is suitably challenging
- teachers have more frequent opportunities to observe and learn from best practice across the provision
- there is greater consistency in the coverage of different curriculum subjects between the sites.

An external review of the management committee 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 the leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 1 November 2016 to 2 November 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the centre's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim executive principal, associate principal, the director of education of the Wellspring Academy Trust, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority. They met with members of the senior leadership team, a group of teachers and visited each of the six main sites. They observed teaching and learning in classrooms and pupils' behaviour as they arrived at the school. One inspector visited two of the off-site venues commissioned to provide education for the centre's key stage 4 pupils. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and checked the school's safeguarding records. Inspectors looked at a range of documents including the centre's development plan and records of pupils' attendance and achievement. Inspectors considered the progress the centre has made towards the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection

Context

The Wellspring Academy Trust has led the work of The Lincolnshire Teaching and Learning Centre (LTLC) since January 2016. The interim executive principal, who started in April 2016, has led the ongoing changes to the leadership and structure of the centre since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2016.

The plans for the development and expansion of the existing sites, and for the acquisition of additional premises, are unlikely to be complete until spring 2017. As part of these developments, a new learning base opened in September and is currently located in temporary accommodation in Mablethorpe. Premises in Baumber have been reopened and staff from the Wellspring Academy Trust are now leading a key stage 4 provision in West Ashby. The leadership team has expanded with the appointment of two additional vice-principals. A total of 37 new staff, on permanent contracts, have joined the centre since September 2016.

The process of transformation to an academy continues and is likely to be complete by February 2017.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim executive principal, senior leaders, IEB, academy trust and local authority have worked effectively together to ensure that the pace of

improvement has quickened considerably since June 2016. They have remained focused on the key issues identified at the previous inspection, while also addressing the current challenges associated with the unusually high level of new staff who started in September and the relocation of some pupils to temporary accommodation.

The interim executive principal is universally respected by staff and has ensured that, during a protracted period of ongoing development and change, staff feel valued and well supported. She has successfully implemented an impressive number of well-chosen initiatives since she started in April 2016, some of which are now beginning to show early signs of impact.

A key factor in the historical underperformance of The Lincolnshire Teaching and Learning Centre has been the difficulty in securing a stable and skilled workforce. The senior leaders, trust members and the IEB have worked relentlessly to turn this situation around. Consequently, as of September 2016, over 90% of staff are now permanent and increasingly rigorous processes for recruitment have ensured that staff are more appropriately qualified and experienced.

The most recent changes to the leadership structure also appear to be reaping rewards. The current heads of centre who lead the daily organisation and delivery of services on each of the six sites have gained the trust of staff and pupils. Staff morale appears generally high.

The culture across the centre has changed considerably over the past two terms and is now typified by a growing sense of accountability from the vast majority of staff and a greater focus on teaching and learning.

Senior leaders continue to place pupils' care and well-being at the core of all they do. The recent appointment of a new pastoral team reflects their commitment to improving their systems for safeguarding pupils and their attendance further still.

The centre's systems for self-evaluation are improving but still lack sufficient focus on the impact of leaders' actions. Equally, the school improvement plan is sharper but does not adequately reflect the importance of checking that recent improvements are being sustained.

Senior leaders have introduced new systems for managing the performance of staff. All teachers and teaching assistants have been trained in the new processes and have met with their individual line manager to identify targets to further develop and improve their practice. Although it is too early to assess the long-term impact of these new systems, the staff appear to have greater clarity about what is expected of them and have a better understanding of how they will be held to account.

The systems which were introduced last term to present and analyse information about pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour are now established. Leaders have a clearer view of the needs and achievements of different groups of pupils and this is starting to improve the quality of teaching, as leaders are able to hold staff more effectively to account for pupils' outcomes.

A new website has been set up. Although not all sections are fully populated, it is already providing clear information about the work of the centre and how parents and carers can become more involved in their children's learning.

The chair of the IEB continues to lead the governance of the centre with integrity, commitment and skill. He provides effective support and challenge to leaders and has an accurate view of the current strengths and weaknesses of the provision. He ensures that IEB members now receive the information they require in advance of meetings, which enables them to be better informed and to hold leaders to account effectively. He ensures that all aspects of safeguarding and health and safety remain the cornerstone of leaders' work and that these areas are reported on and discussed at each IEB meeting.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is continuing to improve across the centre. The green shoots of improvement which were seen at the time of the previous inspection last June have developed further. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that all staff follow the school's agreed policies and approaches for teaching, learning and assessment so that teaching is consistently strong in each key stage, year group and class. For example, leaders introduced new exercise books during the summer term to encourage staff to present work to pupils at a high standard and to identify clear next steps for pupils' learning. Not all staff are using these books effectively. Equally, not all staff are consistently following the centre's agreed policy for marking. In these classes, the rates of pupils' progress remain too slow.

There have been significant improvements to the way in which the leaders for English and mathematics support the work of other staff. The leaders now have a substantial amount of dedicated time each week to work alongside other teachers, to model best practice and to assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the centre. These arrangements have only been in place for a few weeks and, as such, it is too early to assess their impact on raising the overall quality of teaching. However, staff who spoke to inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about how useful they are finding this additional challenge and support.

The leader for English has written a plan to ensure that all staff receive the

training they need and that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of reading across the sites. While senior leaders recognise this as a key area for development, there is more to be done to ensure that appropriate books are available to pupils in all classrooms to encourage them to apply the phonics skills they are taught and to promote greater independence and enjoyment of reading.

As seen during previous inspections, teaching is consistently strong in some individual classes in the primary phase, but now increasingly so in some secondary classes. The teaching in these classes is typically characterised by:

- careful planning of activities which match the personal interests and academic abilities of pupils
- skilful questioning by teachers and teaching assistants which enables staff to assess pupils' understanding
- the application of the centre's agreed approaches to managing pupils' behaviour
- an established classroom culture of high expectation and high praise.

In a key stage 2 class, pupils' listening and thinking skills were successfully developed through topic work about the wartime evacuation of children. Also, in a key stage 4 class, the teacher skilfully introduced pupils to the concept of formal and informal language through practical activities about cockney rhyming slang.

In classes where teaching remains weak, teaching assistants are not deployed effectively, adults continue to expect too little of pupils and the agreed approaches to teaching and marking are not followed consistently.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The senior leaders and staff have worked tirelessly since the previous inspection to ensure that recent improvements to the physical environment have been maintained. Classrooms are universally bright and welcoming and, in the most part, the pupils are showing far greater respect and care for their classroom surroundings than previously.

The warm and positive relationships between staff and pupils remain a strength of the centre. The interim executive principal sets the tone for this and ensures that pupils' needs are central to every aspect of planning and organisation.

Since the previous inspection, the newly introduced systems to record the patterns of behaviour for individual pupils have become established. As a result,

leaders are able to analyse the trend of improvements or decline in behaviour more accurately for individuals and groups of pupils. Consequently, pupils receive more effective support more quickly, instances of poor behaviour are declining overall and the number of fixed-term exclusions is also reducing. The senior leaders have ensured that staff have received training in the agreed approaches for behaviour management and, broadly speaking, this is having a positive effect. However, there are too many occasions when staff do not apply the agreed strategies consistently. Consequently, pupils receive conflicting messages about what is expected of them and instances of poor behaviour on some individual sites are not diminishing quickly enough.

The senior leaders recognise that, while the attendance of a significant number of individual pupils is improving from term to term, rates of attendance across the provision are still not good enough. A raft of measures to address this ongoing concern have been instigated since September 2016. These include the appointment of an attendance officer and the creation of a new team to focus upon the pastoral needs of pupils and their families. The impact of these strategies is yet unclear.

Outcomes for pupils

The senior leaders have an increasingly accurate view of the progress that pupils are making in English and mathematics and are analysing these outcomes in far greater depth than has been done in the past. At the time of my previous visit in June, leaders had just begun to gain an accurate baseline assessment of each pupil's skills in English and mathematics, and this work is beginning to bear fruit. As a result, the leaders and teachers are able to measure progress from individual starting points for each pupil.

The school's information for current pupils indicates that pupils' progress remains stronger in key stage 1 and key stage 2 than in key stage 3 and key stage 4. Pupils' progress is stronger in mathematics than in English in each key phase, for each group of pupils. The information also suggests that pupils funded through the pupil premium are making better progress than other pupils.

The interim executive principal continues to make effective improvements to the systems for assessing and analysing pupils' progress and attainment. However, many aspects of this area of the school's work are still developing and not fully in place. For example, there is now a clear timeline for teachers and leaders to meet to discuss pupils' progress and identify targets, but the first cycle of this process has not been completed. Consequently, it is too early to assess how these new processes are contributing to improvements in rates of pupils' progress.

In classes where teaching is consistently strong and the attendance of pupils is good, the quality of pupils' work is improving. During the inspection, examples of work in books for some key stage 2 pupils showed impressive improvements in the quality of handwriting since the beginning of the school year. However, it is still very clear that the progress of pupils in some classes continues to be hampered by irregular attendance, weak teaching and the ineffective management of pupils' behaviour. The progress of the most able pupils is too often limited by the lack of consistent challenge.

Senior leaders are particularly aware of the need to improve the rates of progress and overall outcomes for pupils who receive home tuition. They are working hard to implement systems to accurately assess pupils' learning and to ensure that staff are effectively held to account for the progress that pupils make. However, these actions are at an early stage of development and it is not yet clear if the legacy of poor attendance and underachievement of this group of pupils is beginning to turn around or not.

External support

Leaders and external stakeholders have worked effectively together to ensure that rates of improvement have accelerated significantly since the previous inspection. No-one is in any doubt that there is a significant amount of work still to be done. However, it is equally clear that partnership working between the local authority, Wellspring Academy Trust and the IEB is proving to be effective, that there is a shared vision for improvement and that standards are beginning to rise.

The local authority continues to support The Lincolnshire Teaching and Learning Centre through the work of one of its officers. This role is increasingly one of monitoring the impact of the centre's work rather than one of direct intervention. Staff from the local authority continue to work successfully with senior leaders from the centre, both on the initial admission of pupils to the centre and the reintegration of pupils back into school.