

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Richard Cahill
Principal
Hinckley Academy and John Cleveland Sixth Form Centre
Butt Lane
Hinckley
Leicestershire
LE10 1LE

Dear Mr Cahill

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hinckley Academy and John Cleveland Sixth Form Centre

Following my visit with Claire Shepherd, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 11 to 12 December 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 us 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 May 2018.

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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

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 board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2018.

- Make safeguarding effective through ensuring that there is an appropriate system for monitoring pupils' attendance which includes rigorous, timely checks on absences.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management on raising pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that governors have the skills to hold senior leaders to account with more rigour
 - creating an effective strategy for the use and evaluation of the additional funding the school receives to improve the attendance and outcomes of disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring the accuracy of progress data so that leaders, governors and teachers are better informed about the next steps in pupils' learning
 - strengthening the monitoring of pupils' attendance by including rigorous checks on absence at an earlier stage so that actions can be taken to improve attendance for all pupils
 - implementing the findings of the recently completed review of the curriculum so that it is fit for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
 - making sure that all members of staff are consistent in their application of school policies, including managing pupil behaviour and feedback to pupils.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities to secure good progress and good behaviour in lessons
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide them with work that is appropriately challenging
 - making sure that all teachers use information about pupils' attainment and progress to provide work that is at the right level
 - ensuring that teachers check pupils' understanding regularly in lessons so that learning matches their needs and they make good progress
 - providing more bespoke professional development for staff, including the sharing of best practice, so that teachers can increase rates of achievement for all pupils across the curriculum, especially for boys and disadvantaged pupils.
- Make sure that all pupils understand what constitutes bullying, so they are able to recognise it if it occurs and report it appropriately to staff.

- Ensure that pupils develop a good understanding of fundamental British values so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

An external review of the school's 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 may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 December 2018 to 12 December 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and met with the principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and members of the trust, including the chair of the board of trustees. Telephone conversations were also held with the chief executive officer of the prospective Futures Multi-Academy Trust and with the director of children and family services for Leicestershire. Inspectors held discussions with two groups of pupils and spoke with pupils during lessons and social time. They also met with a group of subject leaders and a group of teaching staff. Inspectors observed teaching in a range of subjects at key stages 3, 4 and 5, although greater attention was directed at provision in the main school. Short visits were made to 24 parts of lessons and these were conducted jointly with school leaders. Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation including information on the school's website. The external reviews of governance and the use of the pupil premium were considered. Inspectors scrutinised records of pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance as well as records relating to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Inspectors also scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures and documentation specifically related to attendance. Telephone conversations were also held with two of the school's major alternative providers, the Hinckley and Bosworth Behaviour Partnership and 'Uneek Learning'.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been significant changes in staffing. Four members of staff left the school at the end of the summer term and a further eight by the end of the autumn term in 2018. The senior leadership of the school is stable. Senior roles and responsibilities have been reorganised and are clearly defined. This includes the designated leader for safeguarding and senior leaders accountable for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, behaviour and personal development and pupils' progress. Ongoing discussions are taking place in support of the school joining the Futures Multi-Academy Trust. Visits to the school have been made by members of The Futures Trust, including the chief executive officer, to assess the viability of the proposed move in the spring term 2019.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Following the previous inspection, the principal wasted no time in drawing up and implementing an effective action plan for improvement. Leaders, including trustees, have rightly prioritised the safeguarding of pupils, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the behaviour of pupils. The whole-school plan is ambitious, comprehensive and addresses all the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 report. The key actions captured in the plan are underpinned by clear

guiding principles and high expectations. Senior leader roles and responsibilities have been reorganised and are clearly defined, enabling regular reviews of leaders' actions to take place. Leaders are realistic that they are on a journey of improvement and understand that not everything can be improved immediately. Following the inspection, however, leaders recognise the need to develop further the attainment and progress of boys and the more able pupils with greater urgency.

In the wake of the previous inspection report, trustees immediately commissioned a review of the effectiveness of governance at the school. Trustees engaged positively with this process and consequently governance is beginning to strengthen. Trustees now have a clearer understanding of their strategic responsibilities and the importance of holding senior leaders to account. They have established formal links with subject leaders and other key aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding. The transparency of information provided to trustees by the principal and other senior leaders is enabling them to develop sharper, interrogative questioning. Currently, however, trust records of discussions with senior leaders do not reflect the depth of the dialogue which is now taking place. Trustees recognise the importance of further improving their ability to provide clear evaluations of the school's provision.

Following the section 5 inspection, leaders took swift action to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. The report called for leaders to improve levels of attendance and to check rigorously pupil absence from school. A clear protocol for checking absence was developed, with the support of the local authority, and implemented successfully. Leaders also implemented a staged intervention system to improve pupils' attendance at school, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. High rates of attendance are now positively acknowledged with pupils and parents. Specific interventions to address poor attendance include the strengthening of communication with parents, referrals to the local authority and, when appropriate, the involvement of an education welfare officer. As a result of these actions, the overall attendance of pupils has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils regularly absent from school has also decreased rapidly, including those pupils with SEND or who are disadvantaged. Leaders recognise the importance of sustaining the improvements in attendance.

The oversight of the funding for pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium has strengthened quickly. Leaders wasted no time in developing a whole-school strategy, known as 'disadvantaged first', to improve the experience of disadvantaged pupils at the school. Leaders have a clear understanding of the barriers to learning faced by these pupils and have implemented a wide range of strategies in helping pupils to overcome them. For example, all teachers have 'pupils' passports' so that they know how to meet the needs of this group of pupils. Key staff, including a welfare officer, have been appointed to ensure that these pupils attend well, behave and make better progress. Furthermore, the outcomes of the pupil premium review, which positively recognises the steps already taken by leaders, provides further recommendations for consideration in order to improve

rapidly the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. There are encouraging signs that the concerted action of leaders is having a positive impact on pupils' attendance and behaviour. However, it is too soon to see the impact of school strategies on pupils' attainment and progress.

The additional government funding that the school receives to help pupils in Year 7 catch up with their peers if they are behind in English or mathematics has not been used well in the past. However, currently, leaders have implemented a new strategy to develop pupils' skills, particularly in literacy. This development is still in its infancy and it is too early to evaluate any impact.

The leadership of the curriculum is effective. Leaders have implemented a revised curriculum model following a review which was completed prior to the previous inspection. The 'curriculum pathways' at key stage 4, for example, have enabled leaders to tailor the breadth of courses on offer more precisely to meet the needs and aspirations of pupils. Where appropriate, this includes access to bespoke courses for pupils presenting specific needs, including those with SEND, such as participation in the forest schools programme and equine therapy. In addition, pupils experience one and a half hours of enrichment learning every fortnight, to ensure participation in and learning from extra-curricular activities such as sugar craft and karate. Pupils told inspectors that these opportunities are valued.

Senior leaders are working more closely with subject leaders to monitor and reliably evaluate the quality of the school's provision. Senior leaders have put into place more stringent line management and quality assurance processes to hold subject leaders and teaching staff to account for pupils' achievement. Leaders' actions include setting challenging but realistic targets for pupils to aspire to. There remain, however, variations in the effectiveness of subject leaders in driving the necessary improvements required, particularly in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Opportunities for the development of subject leadership have been created and, where these have been acted upon, subject leaders are positive about the support they have received. These include support for subject planning and checking standards of assessment. Subject leaders did, however, report to inspectors that these additional levels of support have not been available across all subject areas.

Despite the challenges that the school faces, and some ongoing difficulties, leaders' actions have instilled a sense of optimism about the future of the school. Leaders have a visible presence around the school and staff say that they feel better supported. The culture and morale of the staff is positive. The school environment is well presented, and numerous displays showcase the current work of the school in a way that engages all members of the school's community.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Senior leaders have taken swift action to begin to address the weaknesses identified

in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the last inspection. They have revised the school's expectations for teachers' planning and for providing pupils with feedback. Specific attention has been placed on teachers' planning to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils via the school's 'disadvantaged first' protocol. Leaders have put in place a range of professional development opportunities which enable teachers to plan learning which challenges pupils appropriately. Inspectors noted that teachers' planning is particularly effective in the way that pupils are questioned about their understanding of ideas and concepts. Inspectors also noted that pupils have responded positively to higher expectations about the overall presentation of their work. The quality of teaching is improving.

Teachers have a good subject knowledge, which they use well in sequencing learning activities and in identifying 'enquiry questions'. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally positive and pupils say that their lessons are now better organised. Pupils also say that their lessons now make them think more independently. However, the extent to which all teachers have applied the professional learning in their practice is variable, within and between different subjects.

The extent to which teachers plan learning and provide pupils with work that is appropriately challenging is also inconsistent. For example, inspectors found that teachers' planning in computer science does not sufficiently meet the needs of pupils or engage them in their learning. Consequently, pupils drift off task and low-level disruption occurs. Sometimes the use of time does not accelerate pupils' learning. This was identified in the previous inspection. In a key stage 4 English lesson, for example, the feedback from a recent mock examination was mostly directed towards the aspirations of the most able pupils and, consequently, the less able learners were not supported as effectively. Similarly, in a mathematics lesson, the examination feedback provided for all pupils meant that those who successfully understood the work had to wait before receiving new learning activities.

Inspectors found that across the curriculum, however, there are many examples of stronger practice. In these lessons, a consistent combination of high expectations, together with appropriately challenging work and the consistent application of the school's feedback policy, is enabling pupils to make better progress. In a physical education lesson, for example, pupils in Year 9 were learning about the functions of different muscle groups in the human body. They were enthused by the engaging lesson activities designed for them and were willing to articulate their understanding in response to their teachers' inclusive and probing questioning. In a Year 7 Spanish lesson, pupils were enthusiastic about their ability to construct and articulate sentences about owning pets using the target language. In this lesson, the precise and encouraging questioning of the teacher enabled all pupils, particularly those with specific learning needs, to persevere with challenging tasks and grow in confidence. Effective support provided by an additional adult helped to further the progress these pupils were able to make.

Inspector's scrutiny of pupils' work found clear differences in the application of the school's policy for providing pupils with feedback, particularly in enabling pupils to commit to improving their work. The assessment of work in art, for example, is extremely variable. In contrast, some of the feedback provided in English and mathematics ensures that pupils know how to be successful in improving their work. Furthermore, pupils' understanding of the literacy used in more demanding learning tasks is not fully secure. Samples of work in geography, science and food technology, for example, illustrated that pupils were less confident in their written work with tasks which require a higher level of thought and planning such as explanation and evaluation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have ensured that they have a strong and visible presence around the school site. They have recently revised the school's behaviour policy which incorporates a stronger focus on recognising positive behaviour and achievement, while challenging poor behaviour. Expectations are high. While still early days, the new policy has been implemented consistently by the majority of staff. The proportion of pupils receiving fixed term exclusions has increased slightly since the previous inspection as a consequence of raised expectations. Leaders are aware of this and are monitoring the situation closely. Inspectors noticed that, on the whole, relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils conduct themselves well throughout the school day. They are courteous and wear their uniform smartly. In lessons, pupils tend to be quiet and compliant overall. When the teaching is not sufficiently engaging or challenging, however, pupils' concentration wanes and some low-level disruption results. Pupils who spoke with inspectors say that behaviour at the school has improved overall. They also say, however, that lessons are still disrupted by some pupils in some subjects.

Leaders have taken decisive action to improve the attendance of all pupils, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils. A range of strategies have been implemented effectively, including stronger communication with parents and the appointment of pupil premium learning advisers and a welfare officer. As a result, pupils' overall attendance is now broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has been high in the past, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, but this has also decreased rapidly. However, levels of persistent absence are higher at key stage 4 compared to key stage 3. Pupils are punctual in their arrival at school and to their lessons. Clear systems are now in place that ensure that leaders know the whereabouts of all pupils if they are not attending school. Leaders are aware of the importance of sustaining recent improvements in the attendance of all pupils. Leaders have ensured that pupils receiving their education away from the school site attend and behave well.

At the time of the previous inspection, pupils reported concerns that bullying is not always dealt with well. This was a concern echoed by parents. Leaders have taken

swift action to address this. They have implemented an anti-bullying strategy and ensured that pupils have a clearer understanding of what constitutes bullying, including cyber bullying. Assemblies and the programme for personal, social, health education have enhanced pupils' understanding about healthy relationships, anti-bullying and how to keep safe, including online safety. 'Anti-bullying ambassadors' have recently been recruited by leaders to support further this aspect of the school's work, although this development is in its infancy. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that incidences of bullying are low, and this is confirmed by school records. Pupils also said they have greater confidence that any instances of bullying would be dealt with effectively by staff.

The previous inspection report also called for pupils to develop a good understanding of fundamental British values so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders wasted no time implementing a new strategy to promote these values by incorporating them into the values and ethos of the school. The 'TRUE' values (Trust, Respect, Unite and Excel) and fundamental British values are displayed prominently around the school. Inspectors talked to pupils about their understanding of these values and found that they demonstrated improved confidence in their understanding of respect, individual liberty and tolerance. The vast majority of pupils exemplify these values in their conduct within and outside of lessons, reflecting the school's values.

Outcomes for pupils

In 2018, the overall progress made by pupils at the end of key stage 4 improved across the majority of subjects, particularly in science. While pupils' progress in their best eight subjects overall was below average compared to that of other pupils nationally, it was better than in the previous year. The progress made by boys has improved, although this continues to be lower than that made by girls. Results at A level in 2018 show an improvement compared to 2017 and are broadly average overall compared to those of other students nationally. There are, however, variations between different subjects. Students make strong progress in chemistry and sociology, for example, compared to the weaker progress made by students in art and product design.

The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils in 2018 was similar to that in 2017. While disadvantaged pupils continue to attain significantly less well than other pupils nationally, some improvement is evident in mathematics, science and humanities. However, their progress in a range of optional subjects remains weak. A comprehensive range of strategies to support these pupils is now in place, including additional mentoring and teaching, but it is too soon to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies on the outcomes of current pupils. The oversight of the provision for pupils with SEND has strengthened and these pupils, while small in number, are beginning to make better progress.

Pupils' class work and leaders' internal tracking information indicate that the

attainment and progress of current pupils is at least in line with the outcomes for 2018. Leaders cautiously expect some further improvement to pupils' progress in 2019 but these outcomes remain below average overall, including for boys and the most able pupils.

External support

Leaders, including the designated lead of safeguarding, have benefited from the support of the local authority in improving the school's safeguarding, anti-bullying and attendance policies and procedures. The revised policies have been implemented effectively. Leaders have also benefited from access to professional learning courses for senior and middle leaders provided by the President Kennedy Teaching School Alliance, part of The Futures Trust. An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium for eligible pupils was carried out early in the autumn term. This provided leaders with a deeper insight into the effectiveness of recently implemented strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have begun to implement several of the recommendations identified in the report. The provision for disadvantaged pupils is improving. Trustees have benefited from an external review of the effectiveness of governance which took place during October 2018. Trustees have positively engaged with this process and governance is beginning to strengthen.