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Andrew Wakefield
Principal
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Dear Mr Wakefield

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Edge Academy

Following my visit with Alun Williams, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 11 September, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in June 2018. 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 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 Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring, without delay, that all safeguarding procedures are adhered to by all staff consistently
 - implementing an effective approach to assessment which provides accurate, validated judgements
 - developing and implementing an effective system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching
 - implementing fully the planned changes to SEN provision, ensuring the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are met
 - inducting and supporting new leaders so they have a demonstrable impact, beyond their own classes, on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - ensuring that funding for disadvantaged pupils is carefully targeted and accounted for, and enables them to make rapid progress.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - developing effective strategies for behaviour management which are consistently applied by all staff
 - significantly reducing the rate of exclusion
 - staff seeking pupils' views about their current placement, well-being and progress, then using this information to inform pupils' next steps
 - ensuring pupils receive effective careers information, advice and guidance so they can make informed decisions about their future
 - ensuring that the provision for pupils' SMSC development is well planned and embedded across the wider curriculum
 - making learning activities more relevant and engaging so pupils are inspired to learn and remain focused.
- Significantly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make at least good progress by:
 - ensuring all staff have the highest possible expectations of all groups of pupils
 - providing a structured programme of training and support for staff to help them develop their teaching skills
 - ensuring that all staff use assessment information well to determine pupils' starting points and plan effective learning tasks which enable pupils to make good progress over time

- identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' basic literacy skills through a carefully planned programme
- ensuring teachers set work that provides pupils, particularly the most able, with an appropriate degree of challenge to enable them to achieve their potential.

■ Ensure that all pupils attend school regularly and arrive to school on time.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium is recommended in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 11 September 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), curriculum leaders, pupils and the interim chair of the governing body. The inspection involved a deeper focus on leaders' current work on developing the school's curriculum.

Context

The chair of the governing body resigned at the end of the summer term. The vice chair is currently acting as the interim chair of the governing body. Since May 2019, there have been further staffing changes. Six teachers/instructors and two support staff have left the school. A new lead teacher for science joined the school at the start of this term. The school is restructuring staffing due to cuts in funding. This is because the school's capacity has reduced from 120 pupils to 73 pupils.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders have tightened up procedures to keep pupils safe. The safeguarding team deals with concerns appropriately and quickly. They analyse patterns of concern and address issues that arise through support for individual pupils and the curriculum. This has included supporting pupils with matters related to self-harm, smoking and racism. The revised personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is comprehensive. It covers important topics, such as prejudice and equality.

Leaders have built on the good work since the last monitoring inspection. They have thought carefully about how they can improve the education on offer to pupils. This has led to leaders redesigning the curriculum, tailoring it to pupils' needs. These changes ensure that all pupils experience an academic core of English, mathematics and science. Pupils' experience goes beyond these basic subjects. They also learn practical subjects, such as art and catering.

Teachers make sure that pupils can use what they already know to make sense of new ideas. However, teachers' planning of some subjects does not always enable pupils to develop their knowledge progressively. Leaders know this is an area for development. They have used appropriate actions to resolve it. Consequently, teachers now make much better use of assessment information to decide what pupils need to learn next.

Teachers take into account pupils' special educational needs when planning learning. This helps pupils to approach their learning with more confidence. The SENCo has developed good links with other professionals. They come into school and offer

practical advice to teachers. Teachers take heed of and implement this advice for the benefit of pupils. However, teachers do not meet the needs of pupils who have education, health and care (EHC) plans as well as they might. This is because they do not use the information in the plans well enough when planning lessons. Also, the statutory reviews of some EHC plans are overdue.

Leaders have been particularly successful in getting pupils to read for pleasure. Several pupils who previously had little interest in reading are now excited by it. They choose to take books home to read for enjoyment. A new school library is being installed next month. Leaders' hard work to address gaps in pupils' reading knowledge is paying off.

Leaders have made sensible changes to the timetable to ensure that pupils do not miss lessons due to off-site visits. Now, all Year 11 pupils attend work-related learning sessions at the same time. This is working well. This learning helps prepare pupils well for their future. Off-site courses, such as mechanics and landscaping, motivate pupils and develop their employability skills.

Staffing turbulence and a lack of continuity in pupils' learning had a detrimental effect on Year 11 outcomes. The 2019 GCSE examination results were weak, although better compared to the previous year. For example, all pupils achieved at least one qualification. Almost all pupils achieved qualifications in English and mathematics. Almost all pupils moved on to a college course at the end of Year 11.

Leaders encourage pupils' personal development well. For example, they organise trips to places such as Birmingham central library, a Buddhist temple and a trip to Wales. These experiences help pupils to appreciate the rich diversity within Britain.

There has been a phenomenal change in pupils' behaviour since the last monitoring inspection. Leaders have completely stopped pupils smoking on the school site. The number of times pupils take themselves out of lessons without permission has reduced. Incidents of swearing have significantly decreased. Staff apply the behaviour policy fairly and consistently. Pupils' attitudes to learning are much more positive. The large majority settle down to their work and get on with it. Following leaders' raised expectations of pupils' behaviour, exclusions rose considerably last term. Since that time, pupils' improved behaviour has led to a steady reduction in the use of exclusion.

Leaders listen to the views of pupils. They take their ideas into consideration when thinking about how the school should be run. For most of the time, the school environment is much calmer and conducive to learning. Pupils say it is easier to work now because there are fewer distractions. Occasionally, teachers forget to sign praise cards at the end of lessons.

Attendance has improved considerably, albeit from a low base. Leaders check attendance rigorously. They target pupils with low attendance and put in place

appropriate strategies to improve it. Pupils' punctuality is much better. This has been aided by strategies such as breakfast club and providing travel vouchers for some families. Almost every pupil now attends school on a full-time basis.

Leaders continue to explore options to become a sponsored academy. No permanent arrangements have yet been made.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school has turned a corner. Leaders have shifted from a 'command and control' approach to managing improvements to a more collaborative 'working together' model. Staff are now beginning to share what they do well with other colleagues. As a result, positive change continues to gather momentum.

Leaders are clear about priorities and waste no time in bringing about necessary changes. The school improvement plan targets the right priorities. Governors keep a close check on leaders' work and ask challenging questions. They know about the improvements and play an active part in contributing to the school's success. Similarly, they know which aspects still need further work, such as developing the broader curriculum.

Senior leaders have made strong appointments, particularly to leadership posts. They have made sure that the right people are in the right place to do the right jobs. This continues to build leadership capacity. The sense of team work is very evident throughout the school. Leaders give clear, unequivocal messages about what must be done to make sure pupils are happy, feel safe and achieve well. There is buy-in from staff. Pupils recognise this. They say staff care for them and support them very well, both with their learning and their personal development.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The newly formed leadership team works with a clear plan to address weaknesses. They work together to get the job done. They are honest and realistic. They constantly review their actions and then amend school improvement plans. This ensures that there is continual improvement.
- Leaders keep the needs of vulnerable pupils at the forefront of their minds. They are committed to providing pupils with the right type of learning experiences to allow them to grow and flourish.

External support

The Edge staff work well with REACH alternative provision. They have developed their subject knowledge through working with REACH subject leaders.