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Dear Miss Bowen

Special measures monitoring inspection of The East Manchester Academy

Following my visit with Osama Rahim, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and Craig Yates, OI, to your school on 30 November and 1 December 2021, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. We discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint early career teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim management board, the chair of trustees of the Education and Leadership Trust, the regional schools commissioner and

the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 30 November and 1 December 2021

Context

The Education and Leadership Trust appointed a new interim executive headteacher in September 2021. The interim management board (IMB) has recruited two additional members. A new subject leader for modern foreign languages was appointed in September 2021. Since the last inspection, four teachers have left the school and five have joined.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Trustees, members of the IMB and leaders continue to successfully tackle the weaknesses identified in the previous inspections. Together, they are demonstrating increasing capacity to build on the previous improvements to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Furthermore, they are taking appropriate actions to strengthen the quality of education and the support that pupils receive to help them with their reading and their additional needs.

Leaders and staff have sustained the improvements to safeguarding noted in the most recent monitoring inspections. Staff are increasingly knowledgeable about safeguarding. They are vigilant and confidently report concerns about pupils. Pupils told inspectors they feel safe. They say they are well looked after. Pupils are confident that they will get support if they need it.

Leaders throughout the school have a thorough understanding of the areas that remain in need of significant improvement. They demonstrate a clear vision of what they and the staff are seeking to achieve. They use well-designed plans to ensure that their actions are focused on the most pressing priorities. Leaders engage positively with staff when introducing change. Staff told inspectors that leaders give them a real clarity of purpose.

Leaders have ensured that pupils in all year groups have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. This curriculum is suitably ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders are continuing to strengthen the effectiveness with which the new curriculum is implemented. They are supporting subject leaders to improve subject plans. Increasingly, these plans are well ordered. Some plans provide a clearer insight into the knowledge that pupils should learn than was the case in the past. However, this is not consistently the case. Often, plans do not give teachers a well organised sense of the important knowledge that pupils should learn. In these instances, teachers do not have the information that they need to select the most appropriate activities to support and check on pupils' learning.

Leaders carefully monitor the quality of education. Consequently, they have an accurate understanding of how the curriculum is delivered across subjects. They are providing teachers with carefully designed support to help them improve their practices. This support is helping some teachers to improve quickly. That said, many teachers are still at the early stages of putting recent training into place. Consequently, pupils' learning across subjects and year groups is still varied. Many pupils still cannot talk with confidence about what they know and remember in the subjects that they are studying.

Leaders are providing staff with training that is helping to strengthen their support for pupils with SEND. More staff are providing effective practical support to help these pupils overcome some of their additional needs in lessons. However, not all staff do this sufficiently well. Furthermore, some pupils with SEND struggle to access some subject content. Many staff are not equipped with the knowledge and skills that they need to support these pupils. As a result, the support that pupils with SEND get in lessons remains mixed. This leads to uneven engagement from some of these pupils, which in turn affects their behaviour and progress.

Leaders have recently introduced new approaches to support and promote reading effectively. They have secure systems to identify pupils' reading abilities and needs. Pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read are suitably supported to strengthen their reading knowledge. Teachers have begun to introduce carefully chosen reading activities into form time and subject lessons. Pupils engage well in daily reading time, which is beginning to instil positive reading behaviours and habits across the school. Pupils told inspectors that they value these recent improvements. Nonetheless, teachers are still developing the confidence to lead these activities consistently well. It is too early to see the impact of these recent initiatives on pupils' reading abilities.

Most pupils behave appropriately in lessons and around school. These pupils respond well to what staff ask them to do. Pupils told inspectors that they witness less bullying and hear less derogatory or discriminatory language than in the past. Pupils feel more confident in how staff manage these incidents and other types of poor behaviour. However, there are small groups of pupils who still persistently challenge the school's expectations of behaviour. Leaders remain strongly focused on further improving behaviour. They are ensuring that staff get the support they need to manage the behaviour of these pupils more effectively in lessons and around school.

Leaders have ensured that pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved quickly since April 2021. The overall attendance of pupils is consistently higher than the rates of attendance in the past. Leaders have successfully reduced the number of pupils who are persistently absent. This includes some pupils who are disadvantaged and those with SEND. Despite this, the attendance of some of these pupils remains low. Leaders have credible plans to take further action to better support and challenge the low attendance of these pupils.

Leaders ensure that staff understand their role in strengthening the weaknesses at the school. Staff feel challenged but happy at The East Manchester Academy. They feel well

supported by leaders. They said that leaders are approachable and listen to staff. Staff, including teachers in the earliest stages of their career, are positive about the training that they receive. They value the opportunities they are getting to improve their teaching practice and their management of behaviour. Leaders invest well in time for staff to plan and work together. Staff say this helps them to achieve a healthy and manageable workload.

The IMB is proactively strengthening its capacity in readiness for the transition to a substantive local governing body. New members are adding specific current educational experience and expertise. Members use their expertise effectively to challenge and support leaders about their current priorities.

Additional support

Support from the Education and Leadership Trust is successfully adding capacity to the leadership of curriculum and pedagogy. Through this, subject leaders and teachers are strengthening their knowledge and practice of effective curriculum delivery. Leaders are making effective use of external support from another trust to specifically improve subject plans and teachers' practice in mathematics and modern foreign languages. Through support from local authority, leaders continue to access a wide range of external safeguarding partners. This is helping to develop stronger pastoral provision and provide specific care for pupils who need it.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They met with the interim executive headteacher, members of the interim management board and trustees. Inspectors also met with representatives of Manchester local authority.

Inspectors visited lessons to observe behaviour, learning and the support that pupils receive. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around school. They met with groups of subject leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, subject plans, and the records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They spoke with leaders who have responsibility for reading and SEND.

Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility.