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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Matthew Ball
Interim Headteacher
Ridgeway Secondary School
Evesham Road
Astwood Bank
Redditch
Worcestershire
B96 6BD

Dear Mr Ball

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ridgeway Secondary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 and 15 June 2022, 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 most 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 October 2021. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

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

The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

**The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.
The school may appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.**

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 Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Howes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 14 June 2022 and 15 June 2022

Context

There have been several changes to key staff since the last inspection. The previous headteacher and the business manager have left the school. An interim headteacher and deputy headteacher have been put in place. An additional deputy headteacher has been seconded to the school from a local trust to work with the school on a full-time basis. Two interim assistant headteachers have also joined the senior leadership team to provide further capacity.

During the spring term 2022, staff absence was particularly high. This was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and meant that several temporary teachers were brought into the school to cover lessons.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Leaders and trustees have taken effective steps since the previous inspection to help the school move forward. They have rightly prioritised the need to ensure that safeguarding is effective and have made several improvements in this area.

Safeguarding has significantly improved since the last inspection. A new designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has been appointed along with other pastoral staff. Leaders have reviewed and updated the school safeguarding policy so that it is compliant with government guidance and reflects the local context of the school. In addition, leaders have introduced a new online system to record and log safeguarding incidents. This is well managed and kept up to date. Leaders ensure that pupils who need help and support get this in a timely way. Staff are clear what they should do if they have a concern about a child and where this should be recorded. The new DSL has also strengthened the information about safeguarding that is presented to trustees. This is helping trustees to have a fuller understanding of the work leaders do to keep pupils safe.

At the previous inspection, not all staff had received safeguarding training and pupils were not appropriately supervised throughout the school day. Leaders have ensured that all staff have now had safeguarding training. This has included training on topics such as peer-on-peer abuse and extremism. Staff receive regular safeguarding updates through weekly briefings to alert them to any emerging concerns. Leaders have put in place a new duty rota to ensure that pupils are appropriately supervised at social times and when they leave the school site.

Leaders have started to take effective action to improve the quality of education. Staff have been provided with training so that they are clear about how topics should be logically ordered so that pupils can build their knowledge and understanding over time. Leaders have used the national curriculum as a benchmark to help ensure the curriculum in each subject is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs

and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders recognise that there is further work to do to ensure that the curriculum in every subject is coherently planned and sequenced. They also recognise that there is more work to do in order that the key stage 2 curriculum successfully builds and links to what pupils study in key stage 3.

Leaders have looked to introduce more consistent routines in lessons. Staff have received training on using 'recall activities' at the start of lessons to help pupils remember more of what they have been taught. Further training has also taken place around the effective use of questioning. However, the quality of teaching remains too variable. The work given to some pupils is not sufficiently demanding and not all staff have high enough expectations of the work pupils should produce, particularly in exercise books. Furthermore, teachers are not systematically checking pupils' understanding in order to identify errors and misconceptions quickly enough. This does not help teachers to amend and adapt teaching when gaps in pupils' knowledge emerge.

Leaders have taken action to improve pupils' behaviour. They have carefully put together a new behaviour policy and have consulted with parents and carers and pupils as part of this process. Leaders have provided training for staff so that they are clear about their role in helping to apply the new policy consistently. As part of improving behaviour, leaders have also launched a new rewards system. Pupils can achieve points for positive behaviour and win prizes as part of a termly raffle. As a result of these changes, behaviour at social times is now calm and orderly and pupils move to lessons swiftly. Pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are also starting to improve.

Over the course of this academic year, permanent exclusions and suspensions have risen. Leaders are clear about the reasons for this and why it has been necessary to take this course of action. Leaders carefully track and monitor exclusion data, including internal isolations. This is helping to identify patterns and trends so that behaviour interventions are targeted at the right pupils.

Leaders have continued to build and strengthen processes and systems around pupils' attendance. Leaders are benefiting from the support of the local authority and, in addition, have appointed a new full-time attendance officer to work in the school. Leaders ensure that all absences are followed up to check that pupils are safe and well. Leaders are tracking and monitoring attendance carefully so that interventions are well-targeted at those pupils who need support. Leaders recognise the importance of rewarding positive attendance. Weekly praise from key stage leaders and access to trips are proving successful. As a result of these actions, both absence and persistent absence are reducing.

While several areas have improved since the last inspection, the school improvement plan is not fit for purpose. It does not cover all areas of weakness that were identified at the last inspection. Furthermore, the plan does not set out clearly the precise actions leaders will take and how these will be monitored and evaluated. This does not help trustees hold leaders to account for the actions they are taking.

Additional support

A chief executive officer from a local trust is supporting the school two days a week as part of his role as a national leader of education.

Leaders have used the support from local secondary schools to develop and improve the curriculum. Each department has been attached to a specialist leader in education to discuss and share ideas around curriculum planning and sequencing. Subject leaders have valued the opportunity to liaise with subject specialists in other schools.

A local headteacher has also supported the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. Meetings have taken place around the effective use of teaching assistants and how pupils with SEND can be best supported.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, representatives of those responsible for governance and representatives of those providing additional support.