

3 September 2019

Update on The Jane Lane School, A College for Cognition and Learning

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe, Education & Skills

Executive Summary:

All maintained schools in Walsall have delegated authority by the Council to ensure the effective governance and running of their schools. This authority is delegated to the governing body and they are required to 'fulfil its statutory functions in relation to the school and to be accountable for ensuring that its decisions support the best interests of the school and its pupils'¹

The Jane Lane School is one of 7 schools in Walsall that provide special education for children and young people with complex needs. It currently has 156 pupils on roll aged between 7 years and 19 years old.

Ofsted conducted a full inspection of the School on 27 and 28 November 2018. The lead inspector advised the Chair of governors, Deputy Head teacher and the Interim School Improvement Manager that the School was inadequate in all areas and that there were safeguarding issues that needed urgent attention. There were issues that the School and Governing Body urgently needed to address and Ofsted shared their concerns with the Local Authority.

Immediate actions included the Local Authority brokering the support of two outstanding and experienced head teachers (one with experience of SEND), to work with the Deputy Head teacher alongside the Interim School Improvement Manager, a School Improvement Partner and the Safeguarding Lead for Education.

An Interim Executive Board² (IEB) was established at Jane Lane School in January 2019. The Board is currently chaired by an experienced governor and IEB Lead, who is a former head teacher with a wealth of experience in terms of school leadership and turning round schools in challenging circumstances, including, whilst Head at a school in Walsall, being rated one of the most improved at the time for outcomes. In July, the previous Chair of Governors took the decision to resign for personal reasons. The Vice-Chair agreed to become Acting Chair until a new Chair is appointed at the start of September. The other members of the Board include an experienced former special school Head teacher; another former Walsall Head and previous Chair of the Walsall Virtual School Management Board, and also the Council's Head of Service for Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement. An additional member of the IEB has also been recruited, a recently retired Head of School from Walsall has agreed to join the IEB from September.

¹ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/Circular---2010-18-governors-guide.pdf>

² An IEB is a small group of experienced governors, appointed by the Secretary of State to lead the governance of a school during a period of significant challenge/ governance failures in a school

The Board meets regularly with priorities being around monitoring delivery of the post-Ofsted action plan, the quality education provision being provided to all pupils of the School and human resource issues.

The Local Authority's Team Around the School meetings, chaired by the Local Authority's Schools Quality Assurance Manager continues to meet the IEB and leadership team to provide challenge and support as appropriate.

An Academy Order was issued on the 8 February 2019.

The Regional Head teachers Board met in June 2019 and approved Forward Education Trust as the Academy sponsor. Due diligence activities have just begun.

On 9 and 10 April 2019 the School received a Special Measures Monitoring visit from OFSTED. The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the School became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 2018.

OFSTED reported:

- Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.
- The Local Authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.
- The School's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

School development activities since March 2019

The primary pupils returned to the School following their placements at other settings across the Borough. These pupils have settled back into their new identified primary area and the school improvement 'progress and impact' report, noted that these pupils were being taught in a calm and engaging environment and that progress for this group is markedly improved since the initial inspection.

During the latest school improvement monitoring visit (08/07/19), it was noted that clearly identified roles and responsibilities are established with particular attention to safeguarding and behaviour management. The newly appointed Dedicated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has instigated safeguarding structures and routines that are supporting a culture of keeping children safe. The use of an online management system is being further refined to provide the best platform for the school to identify, record, act upon and evaluate safeguarding concerns. Child Protection files are well organised and kept in a secure place. The DSL knows the pupils well and is working hard to ensure pupils feel safe and staff are well trained. She has identified the main risks locally and has prioritised training for staff and support for pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and in the classrooms behaviour expectations are prominently displayed, as is information relating to the Designated, and Deputy Designated, Safeguarding Leads. Pupils are well behaved and mostly displayed good attitudes to learning, particularly in the primary phase. Movement between lessons is calm and purposeful.

Safe and well checks on all post 16 students at alternative provision had taken place. The school had clearly documented logs of these visits. All providers have been visited and checked by DSL or Deputy DSL. Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) reviews had mostly taken place for these pupils so their next placements could be secured.

Work continues to engage parents and carers in the improvement journey of the school. A parent carer survey has been undertaken with the results currently being analysed. An update will be provided at the meeting.

Monthly parent/ carer meetings have been taking place and have been well attended. This provides a forum for parents and carers to highlight ongoing issues and receive reassurances as to the progress being made in school. Attendance has been strong and whilst there remain individual concerns, which are being addressed, the overall nature of these meetings is constructive and collaborative.

Parents' evenings were held in the last half term, which provided further opportunities to engage with parents and carers and discuss the progress individual pupils are making. The farewell event for Sixth Form pupils was also very well attended and provided an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of those pupils leaving the school.

Reason for scrutiny:

To reassure Members that appropriate action has been taken by the IEB and Local Authority in response to the recent inadequate judgement of the School.

Recommendation:

That the Committee note the report and actions taken by the Local Authority in managing the case of a special school being judged inadequate.

Background papers:

Full Inspection - Ofsted inspection report 7 February, 2019
Monitoring Inspection - Ofsted letter dated 2 May 2019

Resource and legal considerations:

The resources for managing this situation are being funded through the High Needs block, the School's budget and existing budgets from Access and Achievement. The full cost of this to the Local Authority cannot yet be finalised.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy includes priorities linked to improving school readiness, improving educational outcomes, ensuring people possess the skills to enter and progress into work (Priority 1); improving emotional wellbeing of children and young people, enabling and empowering physical and mental health, removing unwanted variation in health care and ensuring services are inclusive (Priority 2).

Citizen impact:

None.

Environmental impact:

There is no identified environmental impact.

Performance management:

The Committee will be able to review, over time the impact of the actions taken with the aim of the School being removed from special measures as soon as possible.

Reducing inequalities:


All children and young people are entitled to access the most appropriate, high quality educational provision available. The mitigating actions taken by the local authority have tried to ensure that no pupils on roll at The Jane Lane school has been disadvantaged by the inevitable disruption caused.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? No.

Consultation:

Parents were invited to attend one of two meeting on 13 February setting out the proposed arrangements. For those parents with either a children post-16 or primary aged, additional meetings were held to discuss the .proposed arrangements for their child. For those parents not able to attend, information was sent to them.

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