

3 November 2020

Update on the Jane Lane Special School

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe – Education & Skills

1. Aim

Update on the Jane Lane Special School, currently in Special Measures.

2. Recommendations

Agree to continue with a high level of support and challenge to the school leadership and governance with regard to standards and improvement and financial management.

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 The Jane Lane School is one of seven schools in Walsall that provide special education for children and young people with complex needs. Ofsted conducted a full inspection of the School on 27 and 28 November 2018. The School was deemed inadequate and placed into Special Measures.
- 3.2 Since the Ofsted judgement, the School has been subject to two Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) monitoring visits. Both visits confirmed that the interim leadership, Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Local Authority were taking effective action to remove the School from Special Measures. Due to the current Covid 19 pandemic, all section 8 (one day monitoring inspections which either take place for schools in a category or for schools where they are judged to be good or better) and section 5 (two day inspections designed to reassess the category of a schools or due to safeguarding concerns) have been suspended until January 2021. Ofsted will be conducting interim visits under section 8 of the inspection framework. These are visits will not result in a change to Ofsted grading and will be non-judgmental. As a school in Special Measures, Jane Lane will be subject to an interim visit.
- 3.3 The School continues to face many on-going problems, which will take some time to address. Staffing structures at the School are being refined and there are some changes to the support staff. The School continues to be led by an acting interim head teacher from a local school, an acting assistant head teacher, an acting designated safeguarding lead and an acting behaviour mentor. The Chair of the IEB and other members of the Board are effectively challenging and holding the School to account for all matters and particularly around staffing and finance.

- 3.4 The last HMI report highlights that leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum and that the balanced curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. During the initial lockdown, the curriculum was delivered, where possible via remote learning and specific learning packs. Since the return of all pupils in September, the School has returned, where possible to the full delivery of the curriculum in secure class teaching/ group bubbles.
- 3.5 The quality of teaching and learning shows signs of improvement. Training and delivery of the areas identified in the last HMI monitoring inspection report have been prioritised and will now be able to be delivered after the initial lock down period. The IEB will be robustly monitoring the delivery of phonics, as there were identified inconsistencies to the quality of delivery. The assessment system has been redefined to ensure that the information is reliable and valid and this will be closely monitored to ensure internal tracking demonstrates pupil progress and any interventions where appropriate.
- 3.6 While there are signs of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, the rate of improvement is being hindered by the instability in staffing. Leaders have now appointed permanent staff in key positions. Teacher performance management will closely monitor the standard and effectiveness of delivery of quality teaching and learning throughout the coming academic year.
- 3.7 Safeguarding is a strength of the School. Leaders are embedding a culture of safeguarding. Training for staff considers the vulnerability of the pupils at the school, this was particularly essential during the lock down period and subsequently when challenging parents about any absenteeism following the full opening of the School to all pupils as of September 2020. Links with external agencies are effective. The School is calm and orderly. Pupils say that they feel safe and they have someone they trust to talk with. Medical plans and intimate care plans for pupils who need them are in place. Additional training has been given to staff when needed.
- 3.8 Leaders have a clear understanding of the School's strengths and weaknesses. The IEB continues to offer leaders effective support and increasingly robust challenge in securing school improvement. Governors work particularly well and collaboratively with leaders. There is a Direct Academy Order (DAO) in regards to the school and the LA and the interim leadership and IEB are working with the identified sponsor (Forward Trust) and the DfE in the transfer to academy status.
- 3.9 Parents and carers are becoming increasingly involved in the life of the School. Representatives from the parents' forum regularly meet with the deputy head teacher and there is a newly formed parent teacher association.

4. ***Financial information***

- 4.1 The work being undertaken to improve the School has caused financial pressure on its delegated budget. The Authority has provided additional resource to support the school to understand the impact of this over the next three years and identify options to manage this, with a licenced deficit agreement now in place with the School which aims to bring the School's financial position back in to balance within this period (as required by schools financial regulations).

- 4.2 The financial position for the school will continue to be regularly monitored over this period to ensure it is in line with the projection approved within the Licenced Deficit agreement, and additional options will need to be identified by the school if this monitoring highlights any variances

Reducing Inequalities

N/A

5. Decide

As a local authority, we will be having monthly 'Team Around the School' (TAS) meetings (see appendix 1) to monitor the improvements against the identified areas for improvement within the latest monitoring report. The school improvement associate will continue to work alongside the interim senior leaders at the School to ensure the robust and measureable action plans have agreed milestones and that the leadership can evidence progress against the plan. There will be a key focus on staffing, teaching and learning standards and finance within the monitoring leading up to the next monitoring visit.

To continue with the high level of support and challenge.

6. Respond

N/A

7. Review

The Jane Lane School is subject to inspection and is a priority school in the Schools Causing Concern (SCC) protocol

Background papers

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