



## Frequently Asked Questions following Inadequate judgement

This paper has been produced by the Rapid Improvement Board and Local Authority to answer questions parents may have following the judgement by Ofsted that Laurence Jackson School is inadequate. This does not mean that we are actively discouraging parents from raising any concerns or asking questions individually. In fact the governing board, in liaison with the local authority, has agreed a communication plan which will ensure parents, stakeholders and the broader community are kept informed of implications for the school and plans to improve performance. This paper is part of that plan.

### **1. What does it mean to be judged inadequate?**

The overall effectiveness of the school is judged to be inadequate and has therefore been categorised as a school of concern, requiring 'special measures'. 'Special Measures' is a term used by Ofsted, following inspections, and refers to the need for the school to receive additional, external support in order to secure the required improvements. The Secretary of State has a duty to make an academy order for any maintained secondary school that requires special measures, to enable it to become an academy and receive additional support from a sponsor. The school will therefore become a sponsored academy. In the interim the school will be closely monitored by Ofsted, usually by an allocated HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector) to ensure that the school makes rapid improvements. Further detail on becoming an academy can be found in subsequent questions.

### **2. Will the school receive more money for being placed in 'Special Measures'?**

No, the school will not receive any additional direct funding because of the judgement. However, as a maintained foundation school the LA is meeting immediate costs to support school improvement and the academy sponsor will attract funding directly from the DfE to enable the conversion to academy. Alongside, the school will continue to bid for any additional funding streams available to schools for improving the quality of education.

### **3. Will the school become an academy?**

Yes, the academy order will require Laurence Jackson School to become a sponsored academy. The governing body and the local authority have a duty to facilitate the school's conversion into an academy by taking all reasonable steps towards that end. We will, therefore, be working with the LA and Regional Schools Commissioner in the

best interests of the school. As a sponsored academy it is very likely that the school will become part of a multi-academy trust.

#### **4. What is a Multi-Academy Trust? (MAT)**

A multi-academy trust is a legal entity that governs a group of schools through a single board of trustees and is accountable for the performance of all schools within the group. Academies are answerable to the trustees and to the Department for Education (DfE) rather than to the Local Authority.

A MAT is a charitable company, limited by guarantee. This means that it is registered at Companies House. The MAT is the employer and holder of land titles.

Although the board of trustees has overall responsibility for each academy, it can choose to have committees for each academy, commonly referred to as a Local Governing Body (LGB) or Local Academy Council (LAC). The level of delegation from the board to a LGB/LAC is determined by the trustees and required to be set out in a Scheme of Delegation. Most academy trusts aim to retain decision-making at local level, where possible, allowing the board of trustees to focus on the strategic direction of the academy trust. Where there are LGB/LACs, governors on LGB/LACs are not directors or trustees (unless they also sit on the trust board).

The benefits of being part of a MAT is access to school to school support for developing and sharing best practice in teaching as well as sharing the high quality staff and resources. The LGB/LC is responsible to the Trust Board, who is in turn responsible to the DfE and ESFA.

#### **5. Will Parents/Stakeholders have a say on which academy trust the school will join?**

No. As a maintained foundation school the Chair of Governors is consulted on potential academy trusts who have shown an interest in the school. However, the final decision is made by the Regional Schools Commissioner, through the Head Teacher Board. At this early stage in the process we are unsure of the decision timeline. Once a sponsor is identified we will encourage the sponsor to engage parents and staff in the conversion process.

#### **6. How will the school come out of 'Special Measures'?**

Upon conversion to an academy the school will be regarded as a new school, with no prior Ofsted rating. It will be inspected within 3 years of conversion.

#### **7. What does Ofsted say the school is doing well?**

Since the appointment of the new Headteacher, school leaders now have an appropriate focus on key priorities for improvement. Under the leadership of the new Headteacher, leaders are now rightly reviewing the curriculum and its implementation, to ensure all pupils' needs are met.

Ofsted has recognised that:

- school ensures students are safe and looked after well with effective systems and procedures in place to safeguard students;
- students are courteous, helpful, polite and respectful to staff and visitors;
- students report that bullying, where it does occur, is dealt with effectively;
- students respect each other and value differences;
- students wear their uniform with pride and present themselves to the standards the school expects of them;
- school provides a broad range of cultural, creative and sporting activities which take place outside of lessons; and
- leaders show determination to develop the school's programme of personal, social health and economic education (PSHE), so that students have the opportunity to explore in depth fundamental British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.

## **8. What does Ofsted say needs to improve?**

The following is a summary of what Ofsted says the school needs to do to improve further:

- rapidly improve outcomes, particularly those who are disadvantaged or have SEN and /or disabilities, so that the progress of pupils is at least in line with national averages;
- improve leadership, management and governance of the school with leaders and governors monitoring, assessing and refining improvement plans regularly and rigorously so that improvements are rapid and sustained;
- improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by insisting that all teachers have the highest expectations of students and ensuring that students are routinely set work that closely matches their ability; and
- urgently improve the attendance of all students, especially that of disadvantaged students
- eliminate any poor behaviour in lessons and around school.

## **9. Does the local authority (LA) have a role in improving the school's performance?**

During the interim period between a maintained school receiving an academy order and the school re-opening as an academy the LA retains the responsibility for the school's performance, including provision for school improvement. Schools that have been judged inadequate by Ofsted are eligible for intervention by the LA and the Secretary of State. There are a number of intervention measures available to the LA, including dissolving the governing board and replacing it with an Interim Executive Board. The required formal process to be followed for that to happen would prolong the timescale for taking action to secure adequate improvement. In order to achieve rapid improvement at the earliest opportunity the LA has worked with the governing board to establish a Rapid Improvement Board. This is a small group of experienced and skilled governors, supported through the appointment of experienced leaders in education, to challenge and support leaders in taking the necessary action to address issues raised in the inspection report. The arrangement will also allow for greater flexibility to involve the sponsor, once agreed, in the governance of the school and work towards its preferred local governance model.

#### **10. What action has been taken by the governing board and school leaders to secure rapid improvement?**

Governors are committed to improving the school and, as outlined above at question 9, acted immediately on the direction of the LA to set up a Rapid Improvement Board (RIB). The governing board has agreed the terms of reference for the RIB and has empowered it to carry out core governance functions on behalf of the governing board. The focus of the RIB is to hold school leaders to account for the performance of the school. In order to ensure there is sufficient breadth of experience and knowledge to challenge leaders on school improvement, governors have appointed two associate members, Diane McConnell (Interim CEO) and Simon White (CEO Vision Academy Learning Trust, NLE and Head Teacher at Egglecliffe School), both to sit on the RIB, both of whom will sit on the RIB.

The RIB first met on 28 March 2019, with weekly meetings taking place from 30 April 2019. The governing board will continue to meet at least termly, whilst the school is a maintained foundation school, and will be kept informed on the work of the RIB. Any concerns of the governing board that the RIB was not achieving its aims and purpose, the LA will be notified and asked to review the position. The LA will also be monitoring the success of the RIB and has the power to appoint additional members, and may, if deemed necessary, initiate other powers of intervention.

The school has secured additional support from a National Leader of Education (NLE) in order to support improvements in leadership and teaching and learning. NLEs are strong school leaders, who have experience of effectively supporting schools in challenging circumstances.

An action plan which sets out a comprehensive programme of school improvement has been agreed in partnership with the NLE and LA; much of which is already underway.

#### **11. What help will the school receive from outside agencies?**

The school will work closely with the Local Authority, National Teaching Schools judged by OFSTED to be outstanding along with Local and Specialist Leaders of Education.

Through the Opportunity North East (ONE) Vision Schools initiative, discussion has started around an education review and tailored programme of support for the school.

#### **12. Will children notice any differences?**

The day to day experience of pupils is unlikely to change in terms of the school's operational structure and procedures ie. the school day, SEND support and extra curriculum activities. However, in lessons pupils will notice increased levels of challenge and demand. They may also see more visitors in classes and around school involved in scrutinising and evaluating teaching and learning. The impact of all the strategies that are being put in place is aimed at enhancing provision and improving outcomes for all pupils.

#### **13. Will parents/carers notice an immediate improvement?**

The RIB mentioned above will provide enhanced challenge and support to drive school improvement, pending conversion to a sponsored academy. As a parent you are likely to become aware of an increased focus on attendance and behaviour as we address some of the issues raised by the report. There is also likely to be changes to assessment and reporting on the progress of your child. For example, many of you may have noticed that the most recent progress report suggested your child has not made expected progress, even though they may have put in the required effort and attitude to learning. This is because of increased rigour in the assessment process and raising of expectations.

We will also be asking all parents to support our drive to improve the literacy skills of all our students so they are able to access the curriculum at an appropriate level.

An email alert has already been set up to notify parents of new input on the school website which is relevant to them.

Once the school becomes a sponsored academy, governance of the school will transfer to the academy trust and further changes can be expected.

#### **14. What can parents/carers do to help?**

Parents/carers can contribute by continuing to help and support their child in working hard at school and at home. We would ask that all parents:

- Ensure that their child attends school on time every day.
- Ensure that their child is ready and fully equipped to attend school, dressed in full uniform, with pen pencil ruler, their exercise books and an appropriate school bag.
- Support their child by ensuring that they complete any homework / revision they need to complete.
- Take an active interest in what their child is learning about in school and celebrating the success and achievement with them.
- Regularly talk to their child about their future plans and emphasise that their choices for future careers will be much greater if they are successful in their studies at school.

By continuing to support the school's efforts parents/carers are contributing directly to improving outcomes. It will also be helpful for parents/carers to be positive with their children about what the school is doing and the steps being taken to secure improvements.

#### **15. How can parents concerns and/or questions?**

Mr Paul Worthy has been appointed as Parent Champion to oversee the agreed communication plan. His role is to:

- champion parent representation on the Rapid Improvement Board;
- act as a point of contact for parents to share their concerns or questions;
- issue fortnightly e-bulletins for parents;

- utilise display space in school and on the school website to share information with parents and promote events/activities aimed at seeking their views;
- survey parents using the Ofsted survey model, to measure the satisfaction of parents.

You may forward any concerns or questions you have via email to Paul on the following account [parentchampion@laurencejackson.org](mailto:parentchampion@laurencejackson.org). This account will be accessed by the Head Teacher and Parent Champion on a weekly basis.

#### **16. How will admissions to the school be affected?**

Once the school becomes a sponsored academy the academy trust will be the admission authority and responsible for determining the school's admission arrangements. The arrangements must comply with the School Admission Code and, normally academy trusts adopt the same arrangements as the LA. The LA remains responsible for making sure there are sufficient places locally and will coordinate the admissions process for the school. This means parents/carers will still only have to complete one application per child. Agreed admission arrangements are required to be published online.

#### **17. Would students from other primary schools still be able to apply to Laurence Jackson School?**

Yes. All students will be welcomed and will be allocated in line with the School Admissions Code and the admissions process coordinated by the Local Authority.

#### **18. Will staff change?**

Every year some teachers leave the school for a variety of reasons. Where recruitment is necessary, the school will continue to pursue a proactive recruitment strategy aimed at securing the best teachers. Also, there will be more opportunities for staff to access professional development events and programmes.

Members of the Rapid Improvement Board and the Local Authority are committed to securing the improvements that are needed at Laurence Jackson School and are regularly reviewing evidence that improvements are being made. They have confidence in actions that have been taken to improve the school since the inspection took place. As this document indicates, they will continue to communicate with all stakeholders regarding the school's improvement journey.