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Mr M Davidovic
Headteacher
Lawnswood School
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Dear Mr Davidovic

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Lawnswood School

Following my visit with Stephen Wall and Jane Hughes, Additional Inspectors, and Her Majesty's Inspector, Shirley Gornall to your school on 05 and 06 October 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **satisfactory**

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – **good**

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Leeds local authority.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009

- Ensure that systems and procedures for the safeguarding of students are fully effective.
- Improve students' behaviour by ensuring consistent implementation of strategies for behaviour management across the school.
- Raise the quality of teaching by making sure that all staff have sufficiently high expectations of students and plan learning effectively.
- Improve attendance so it is at least in line with the national average.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Lawnswood School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 05 and 06 October 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher; members of the senior leadership team and other staff; groups of students; a group of newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the school; the health and safety officer; the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed 24 lessons.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit several staff have left. Seventeen new teachers took up post in September 2010, including 10 newly-qualified teachers. A health and safety officer took up post in July 2010.

An interim headteacher has been appointed to take over from January 2011 at the retirement of the current headteacher, pending the appointment of a permanent headteacher. The interim headteacher has been assisting the school's leaders in an advisory capacity since the inspection in September 2009.

Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Students' achievement and enjoyment are improving. Since the previous monitoring visit the pace of improvement has accelerated. Attainment in the GCSE examinations in 2010 was higher than in 2009, with a significant rise in attainment in science. Strong leadership in science and robust analysis of data are factors underpinning this improvement.

However, the proportion of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics is still below the national average. Students' attainment in GCSE examinations did not reach the targets agreed with the local authority. There is still a long way to go to close the gap in relation to national attainment.

Results in mathematics also rose, but too many students continue to underperform in English. At Key Stage 3, students' progress in English is not as good as in the other core subjects of mathematics and science. There are encouraging signs that staffing in English is becoming more stable and that both leadership and teaching are improving. Inspectors saw some good teaching methods being used in English lessons. The leaders of English and mathematics are working together far more closely in order to identify key weaknesses, so that these can be eradicated as early as possible. A strategy has been drawn up to promote literacy across the school. This is in the very early stages of implementation.

Staff are drawing increasingly effectively on a range of strategies to tackle underachievement. Systems for assessing and tracking students' progress have improved substantially. Middle leaders are more confident about analysing data and are using this information more effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas. This is providing a more secure foundation on which to build sustainable improvements. It is helping the school to identify where best to intervene to support students in order to accelerate their progress. This support is proving to be increasingly effective in providing appropriate work and challenge for all students, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

In many of the lessons inspectors observed, learning was good, because the quality of teaching is improving rapidly. Students are now making better progress than in the recent past and this is enabling them to begin to catch up to where they should be. Students' engagement in lessons is generally good; they are keen to do well.

The sixth form continues to be a strength. Overall outcomes here remain good. Within this positive picture the school has rightly identified further mathematics, and the achievement of some boys, as being key priorities for further improvement.

Other relevant student outcomes

Strategies for improving behaviour are having increasing impact. Students' comments, and inspectors' observations confirm, that the school is becoming much calmer. Younger students say that they feel safe on corridors and in the playground because there is much more effective adult supervision around the school and because older students behave more considerately. Students also say that behaviour in lessons is getting much better because, not only are lessons becoming more interesting, but teachers are applying the stepped system of rewards and sanctions much more consistently. Recorded incidents of misbehaviour are falling and the instances of praise for good behaviour are rising. The school is developing a system of rewards for good and improved behaviour. Students say that pockets of disruptive behaviour in lessons remain but that these are becoming far fewer. They say that on the few occasions where poor behaviour disrupts lessons, this tends to be because the teaching does not engage students fully in their learning.

Rising attainment indicates that students' preparation for their future economic well-being is improving. Following a vigorous push on improving attendance, attendance levels are beginning to rise and the number of students who are persistently absent is falling. Students say that the school has successfully raised the profile of the importance of regular attendance by, for example, making the link between achievement and attendance explicit in assemblies and lessons. Parents and carers are increasingly made aware of the importance of good attendance. Procedures for informing parents and carers of absences now routinely include first-day telephone calls and/or text messaging.

Attendance data for 2009 to 2010 show only a modest improvement on previous years, and attendance remains well below average. Nevertheless, attendance figures for the current term thus far are encouraging. These show that the steps taken are

starting to have a positive impact. Working alongside external agencies and the local authority, the school has intervened rigorously to tackle persistent absence.

Students say, and observations confirm, that punctuality to school and to lessons is improving. This is partly due to increased levels of supervision at the end of breaks and lunchtimes to encourage students to get to lessons; and partly to the introduction of sanctions, such as detention, for repeated lapses in punctuality.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve attendance so it is at least in line with the national average – **satisfactory**
- Improve students' behaviour by ensuring consistent implementation of strategies for behaviour management across the school – **good**

The effectiveness of provision

The school is successfully improving the quality of teaching and learning. Professional development continues to be well focused on the school's priorities. Coaching and sharing good practice have been instrumental factors in bringing about improvement. A team of lead teaching practitioners within the school has been appointed and is carrying out high-quality staff training. As a result, lessons are becoming consistently more challenging for students.

Almost all inadequate teaching has been eradicated. The school's leaders, together with the local authority, continue to monitor the quality of teaching and learning regularly. They use the outcomes of these observations increasingly effectively to guide staff. The school's records show, and students say, that the proportion of good teaching is growing quickly. Observations during the monitoring inspection confirm this. Many lessons inspectors observed were good and some were outstanding. A minority of lessons were satisfactory; none were inadequate.

Occasionally, the quality of teaching is better than students' learning, because some students have yet to overcome a legacy of weaker learning. At times students' concentration in lessons falters and their progress slows down.

Teachers have good subject knowledge which they are using increasingly skilfully to ask challenging questions. Teacher's plans for lessons have become more appropriate, with clearer expectations of what students can do and what they will be learning. Tasks better match the needs and abilities of different groups. Occasionally, inspectors noted some lack of challenge for higher-attaining students.

The school's specialisms of mathematics and computing continue to have a satisfactory impact overall on the drive for improvement. Of note are the much more frequent, confident and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) by teachers in delivering their lessons. This is promoting students' engagement and understanding. The mathematics department is taking a good lead in modelling good practice in teaching methods.

Teachers are growing more confident in assessing students' progress in lessons and over time. Students know their individual targets but say that they would welcome more information about how the targets are set and more involvement in assessing the progress they are making. Teachers' marking is inconsistent: comments vary in how effectively they tell students what they need to do to improve their work.

Changes have been made to the curriculum from September 2010 aimed at better meeting students' needs. Extra time has been allocated to English in Years 7 to 9 to help build stronger foundations in students' literacy skills at an earlier stage. The school has begun to implement a literacy strategy, so that, for example, there are key words for each subject prominently displayed and reinforced in classrooms. Inconsistencies remain in how effectively teachers address errors in spelling, punctuation and sentence structure; and poor presentation of work.

In Years 7 and 8, the school has extended the number of classes where subjects are combined into themes or topics to make them more relevant and interesting. This builds on the successful approach begun in 2009, which resulted in increased enjoyment of learning. The school hopes to foster more positive attitudes to learning from the outset. In a lively lesson observed, students worked in groups on the key words needed to produce a short play and reflected on what makes a hero.

The introduction of a rota of six-week blocks for art, music and drama reflects the school's wish to offer more opportunities for students to be creative and use their imaginations, through project work.

In Key Stage 4, students follow one of three pathways involving academic and vocational subjects in varying proportions. In some cases, these include opportunities off site at other providers, such as further education colleges and local schools, and new accreditation. One group of students is now following a diploma programme in ICT, creative and media or travel and tourism, as part of a consortium involving other schools and providers. Students thus far are very positive about this new course and the independence it fosters. In this way, the school is adapting its curriculum to better meet the range of students' needs. A very small number of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students who are disaffected with school have begun a separate programme of study at the 'Opportunity School', a 'satellite' centre nearby. It is too early to comment on the impact of this latter provision.

These initiatives are improving the curriculum steadily. Through a systematic programme of review, groups of leaders and governors are determining the next steps in developing a curriculum that will be suitably challenging and more fully meet the needs of all groups of students.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise the quality of teaching by making sure that staff have sufficiently high expectations of students and plan effectively - **good**

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The concerted effort of leaders and managers to tackle the action points is beginning to reap noticeable benefits in rising attainment, improving behaviour and

better teaching. The school has been placing greater emphasis on attendance, but thus far impact on this has been more limited. Punctuality is improving.

The school continues to develop the skills and processes needed for effective self-evaluation. Leadership skills are improving steadily. Leaders demonstrate a much more assured grasp of their roles and responsibilities. Increasingly, each is taking charge of driving forward the improvements needed within their area of responsibility. Leaders and managers use data more effectively to check that effective learning and progress are taking place. Skills at analysis are improving, with senior leaders increasingly linking the impact of initiatives across various aspects of school life, such as the relationship between attendance and achievement. Skills of middle managers are beginning to improve. Better processes of self-evaluation are being established in each subject area.

Senior leadership roles were reviewed and strengthened in readiness for the new school year that began in September 2010. The pastoral team for each year group has been reinforced to link behaviour and academic progress more closely together.

The appointment of a health and safety officer is adding to the school's robust practice in safeguarding, by increasing the monitoring of risks within the school and beyond. The single central register held by the school confirms that all the checks that are required on the new staff have been satisfactorily completed. The school keeps a further database to monitor the whereabouts of all the students who are educated off site. There is effective multi-agency support for vulnerable students.

Regular contact between the governing body and the school's leaders to evaluate the school's work and analyse the impact of initiatives is continuing apace. This is increasingly ensuring that governors have a good understanding of the school's priorities and can act promptly and decisively where needed.

The school's expectations of all staff have been set out clearly in a booklet to promote consistency in approaches and practice across the school. Early signs are that a good induction programme is helping to build a good team of new, enthusiastic staff, and is contributing to increasingly good teaching.

The transition in leadership that will be necessary for the pending retirement of the headteacher is in hand.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that systems and procedures for the safeguarding of students are fully effective - **good**

External support

The support provided by the local authority continues to be good. The school's leaders, governors and local authority officers have worked effectively in partnership, taking decisive action to tackle inadequate teaching. The school's adviser has coordinated a range of support tailored to meet the school's needs, including consultants advising core subject departments. The skills of senior leaders

in evaluating teaching have been enhanced by working alongside local authority advisers to undertake lesson observations. This activity has provided the school with an accurate profile of teaching. The better classroom practice observed on this monitoring inspection demonstrates the impact of this work. There has been good support to promote attendance.

The local authority is fostering links with other schools to share good practice. An assistant headteacher from a nearby school has been seconded on to the leadership team to help leaders develop a rewards system for behaviour.

The guidance of a part-time consultant headteacher continues to be effective in building leadership capacity with the school and in supporting the school's leadership team during a time of transition.