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9 December 2010

Mr Mark Burgess
Acting headteacher
Egerton High School
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Lancashire
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Dear Mr Burgess

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Egerton High School

Following my visit to your school on Wednesday 8 December, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is 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

Newly Qualified Teachers may not 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 the Governing Body and the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services for Trafford.

Yours sincerely

Liz Godman
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Secure the longer-term arrangements for the senior management team and distribute leadership roles amongst staff.
- Improve the students' range and quality of achievement, principally through improving the management of their behaviour and the better use of the school's facilities.
- Strengthen governance by increasing the governing body's involvement in school development and in the life of the school.
- Improve the tracking and assessment of students' learning and their progress in managing their own behaviour.

Special measures: monitoring of Egerton High School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on Wednesday 8 December 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The headteacher at the time of the last inspection has retired. The deputy headteacher, seconded to the school in February 2010, has now been appointed permanently and is currently the school's acting headteacher. A former consultant from another local authority is the acting deputy headteacher. Of the five class teachers present at the time of this inspection, two are permanent members of staff. A revised staffing structure has been developed in conjunction with the local authority, the governing body and professional associations. This is undergoing consultation with staff. Nine new members joined the governing body in November 2010. Reduction in the school's deficit budget is planned over the next three years.

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

The pace of students' learning in lessons continues to be slow overall. Sometimes students take time to settle because the planned activities do not interest them sufficiently. Progress is better when students undertake practical tasks that they enjoy, for example, experiments in science and making biscuits in food technology. In these lessons, students are beginning to work sensibly and show developing skills in completing tasks safely and successfully. Where progress is slower, unacceptable behaviour distracts all concerned. The continued use of inappropriate language in some classes is proving a particular barrier to learning. Sometimes students ignore staff requests and carry on with their chosen activity, rather than with the planned lesson.

Students' progress in English, mathematics and science is beginning to increase. In these subjects, work is matched more closely to their needs. Students' work in English at Key Stage 4 indicates that lessons are planned increasingly in line with GCSE requirements. This is enabling students to make steadily improving progress towards their target grades. The school is at the very early stages of exploring accreditation to better recognise students' abilities and achievements. Although students' achievement is increasing very gradually, their attainment remains low overall.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students' behaviour in lessons continues to vary. In the better lessons, students are starting to apply themselves more consistently and to cooperate with adults and with one another. Many are eager to gain the points that are awarded for expected behaviour. This system and associated rewards are helping students to improve their behaviour and to develop better self-control. Generally students' motivation to behave more acceptably is increasing. However, this is inconsistent and for some students, improvements in their personal, moral and social development are at a very early stage. Some students remain unable to regulate their own behaviour and demonstrate limited awareness or concern about its impact on others.

Despite this, the school's data shows a significant reduction in violence and physical aggression. Although the number of short fixed-term exclusions was high at the start of the term, exclusion has proved effective in ensuring students understand the school's expectations and boundaries. This has reduced the incidence of assaults and threatening behaviour to staff and students and consequently, the level of fixed-term exclusions in the term second half of the term.

Students' attendance remains too low. However, the school is rigorous in following up absence and whereabouts of students. The school recognises a next step as undertaking further analysis to pinpoint particular patterns and reasons for absence for groups and individuals, in order to target interventions more precisely. While students' basic skills and their behaviour are beginning to improve, the persistently poor attendance and punctuality of some limits their future employability.

Students are starting to show some improved understanding of a healthy lifestyle. For example, they know the dangers of smoking as a result of the school's work.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve the students' range and quality of achievement principally through improving the management of their behaviour and the better use of the school's facilities – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

There is an agreed form for planning lessons, but its use continues to be inconsistent, in part because of the instability of the teaching team. Lessons are better planned to meet the broad levels of attainment in the class and teachers and support staff are now using the school's system for recording students' behaviour with a much greater degree of consistency.

However, work remains insufficiently matched to individual needs because detailed identification has yet to be completed of students' particular difficulties in learning, although some aspects of assessment are becoming more reliable. For example, students' levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science, assessed at the start of the year, are accurate and recorded. This is providing a clearer basis for providing work to improve students' progress. However, the way in which students' attainment is checked and recorded in lessons continues to vary from subject to subject. There are clear records of students' assessed levels in English and marked work in their books gives a clear indication of the GCSE grade they have reached in a particular piece of work. For many students, guidance on how to improve their work is also given. In mathematics, work is marked increasingly clearly and individual pieces of work are given a level, but generally there is no indication of the students' next steps.

The use of the school's science facilities is much better and is enlivening the curriculum for students, who appreciate the practical work. However, no progress has been made in improving the curriculum and the use of the facilities for design and technology. There are good plans to develop the school's grounds to provide an accredited course in horticulture but these have yet to be implemented. Increasingly purposeful use is made of opportunities for physical education both on and off the school site. This is enhancing the motivation and increasing the enjoyment of a number of students. The school has suitable plans for better meeting students' mental health needs, both on an individual basis and through the curriculum.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve the tracking and assessment of students' learning and their progress in managing their own behaviour – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Support from senior leaders for teachers and support staff in managing students' behaviour is more effective. The daily record system and related rewards is considerably more consistent and is setting clearer parameters for all concerned. Senior leaders apply clear criteria in their follow-up of serious incidents with students and their families. As a result, staff better understand the procedures to follow and feel that support is more reliable. This has been significant in reducing the incidence of violence against staff and students. Senior leaders recognise that for these improvements to continue there is also a need to ensure that students find their learning more consistently relevant and engaging.

The school's plans for improvement focus on the key priority of improving students' behaviour and attendance and have brought about some success in this. However, weaknesses in the plans make it difficult for the school to measure precisely the effect of its actions on improving outcomes. For example, some success criteria relate more closely to the actions to be taken rather than to how the school can

judge the effectiveness of these. The teamwork of the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher is giving them a clearer understanding of how things are improving and of what still requires urgent improvement. Although it is too soon to see major improvements in outcomes, senior leaders' actions are starting to secure the confidence of staff and the governing body and to move the school in the right direction.

New members have strengthened the governing body. Governors are now better organised to provide the necessary support and challenge for further school improvement. The proposed revised staffing structure is suitable to bring increased stability to the school's leadership, teaching and support staff teams, as well as giving greater scope to respond to students' particular emotional and social needs. The school envisages that this should put it in a stronger position in providing better value for money.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- secure the longer-term arrangements for the senior management team and distribute leadership roles amongst staff – satisfactory
- strengthen governance by increasing the governing body's involvement in school development and in the life of the school – satisfactory

External support

Following evaluation of the local authority's statement of action, Ofsted required a number of amendments. Some of these have been made, but overall the statement remains too wide-ranging and its criteria for success continue to be insufficiently linked to improvements in outcomes for students. Despite this, the local authority's actions are helping to secure the early stages of school improvement. For example, local authority advice has helped the school to develop more accurate assessment and to improve practical work in science. It has also supported improvement in the school's response to students' health and well-being and to exploring the range of suitable accreditation to reflect students' achievements. The local authority has also helped strengthen the governing body and to formulate the revised staffing structure.