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Mr Tony Cooper  
The Centre School  
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Dear Mr Cooper

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Centre School**

Following my visit to your school on 16 and 17 March 2011, 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 November 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- **Raise achievement and strengthen learning and progress by:**
  - implementing effective means of measuring students' attainment on entry
  - tracking students' progress over time and measuring their outcomes
  - setting challenging targets for the school and students.
  
- **Manage students' behaviour in the classroom in order that they can learn effectively by:**
  - setting out clear expectations for staff and students
  - ensuring a clearly articulated approach to managing behaviour is applied consistently by all staff
  - writing and implementing effective behaviour plans for all students.
  
- **Strengthen lessons and eliminate inadequate teaching by:**
  - developing and implementing a systematic and rigorous assessment of learning
  - ensuring all lessons are planned in the light of assessment information
  - making learning objectives clear and sharing them effectively with students.
  
- **Increase equality of opportunity by:**
  - planning a broad and balanced curriculum which makes adequate provision for literacy and numeracy
  - providing the extra help needed by students who have more difficulty than most with learning in literacy and numeracy
  - promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
  
- **Strengthen leadership and management by:**
  - clarifying a vision, developing clear aims and setting high expectations for the school, the staff and students
  - creating an effective senior leadership structure, leadership throughout the school and an adequate administration system
  - establishing comprehensive, rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's work
  - ensuring governors challenge and hold the school to account for the effectiveness of its provision and students' outcomes.

## **Special measures: monitoring of The Centre School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 March 2011**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, headteacher of the school, students, staff, a member of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, a new staffing structure has been put in place. Four unqualified teachers have left the school. Two qualified teachers started working part time at the school one of whom became full time a few weeks prior to this monitoring inspection. An additional teacher started working at the school but was unable to continue his employment. Another qualified teacher has been appointed and will start after the Easter break.

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

An increasing number of students are making good progress because they are more engaged in lessons. Teachers are using information about pupils' prior attainment well, to inform lesson planning and as a result the level of challenge has increased. Higher levels of academic challenge together with improved behaviour are helping students achieve more. Most students have risen to the challenge and are more motivated. In lessons, levels of support given to students are more carefully considered and as a result there are more opportunities where students work things out for themselves. Students are much more aware of their own targets and what they need to learn in different lessons. Regular sessions where students work with staff to review targets help them to understand their own progress and how they can improve. Work on improving literacy skills is becoming more embedded across the curriculum and as a result progress is improving. Students are less prone to being disrupted from their learning by each other, although there are times when this still happens. During the monitoring visit, there were good examples of students working in pairs and small groups. This was especially evident during the cultural cross-curriculum morning and when games were used as a teaching tool. Staff have continued to refine tracking and target setting. This information is successfully used to inform groupings and more precisely targeted additional support. The continuation of literacy and numeracy intervention has helped students who attend regularly to maintain good progress. Although attainment is still below national levels the large majority of students are now making at least expected progress and are on track to reach suitably challenging targets.

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

- Raise achievement and strengthen learning and progress – good

### **Other relevant student outcomes**

Students have responded well to higher expectations for their behaviour both within lessons and in more informal times. Better consistency from staff in managing behaviour has helped students to be clearer about boundaries of acceptable behaviour and they are able to respond appropriately for more of the time. The Chinese lunch for the whole school was a great success and demonstrated improvements in the students' ability to socialise. Students are becoming more able to take responsibility for their own behaviour and during this monitoring visit there were some good examples of students correcting their own language and students prompting each other to behave more reasonably. As students behave more appropriately, teachers are becoming more confident in providing opportunities for paired and small group work. This is helping students to increase their social skills and learn how to work with others cooperatively and constructively.

Incidents of poor behaviour and the severity of incidents have continued to reduce over time. At the start of the term, students did not respond well to the staff changes and there was a significant rise in incidents and exclusions. However, this increase did not last long and was still below levels during the same period in the previous school year. Students' understanding of different cultures and their acceptance of different views and beliefs are improving. This progress is supported well by the cross-curricular cultural days and opportunities for discussion and debate in lessons, particularly personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). More students are attending regularly and they are responding well to targets and competition for rewards. There remains a small minority for whom attendance is low.

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

- Manage students' behaviour in the classroom in order that they can learn effectively – good

### **The effectiveness of provision**

Improvement in the quality of teaching has been outstanding since the last visit. Teachers are using assessment information more effectively to plan lessons and expectations of students are much higher. Teachers are clearer about what they want students to learn and are using more imaginative and practical ways of teaching. Students report that lessons are more interesting, they are more engaged and more ready to 'have a go' than in the past. During lessons, more staff use good questioning skills to recap on previous learning and find out students' levels of understanding. Students are increasingly willing to offer answers and contribute to lessons. In the best examples, work is planned progressively so that it builds students' confidence in the early stages and offers increasingly more challenge. More

lessons are planned sequentially and there is an expectation that students will make progress over time that was not always evident, particularly in afternoon sessions, in the past. The teaching observed was at least satisfactory and most lessons had significant strengths as well. More teaching was good than in the last two monitoring visits and students made more progress as a result. There remain instances when students are given too much help but these are far fewer than previously.

The curriculum continues to be developed and is adapted to gain the interest of students. Older students are given opportunities for work experience and work-based learning which are helping them to identify and access a preferred pathway for when they leave school. The cultural cross-curricular days are a positive development and subsequent evaluation is helping to inform curriculum development priorities for the future.

Greater involvement of students in target setting and reviewing their behaviour support plans is giving them a greater sense of responsibility for their own learning and behaviour.

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

- Strengthen lessons and eliminate inadequate teaching – good

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The vision for the school is clearly articulated by the leadership team and the committed staff team are working hard to help the vision become reality. Expectations of the students are higher and staff are keen to make sure students make as much academic and social progress as possible. The focus on improving the breadth of the curriculum while keeping a strong focus on improving basic skills in literacy and numeracy has led to good improvement in the equality of opportunity for students. This has been further enhanced by creating more opportunities for promoting the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Increasingly, the links between the school and the federated secondary school are being used to enhance the curriculum, improve levels of expertise and, therefore, improve the quality of learning. Administrative procedures are well established and there is more than one person who can use the recording and reporting systems. Monitoring and assessment systems established over the last year have been maintained and refined. The whole staff team is making much more use of the information gained and as a result there is a consistent drive for improvement. Further development is now informed by stronger evaluation based on the outcomes for students.

The governing body is making sure its members have a clear picture of the strengths and areas requiring further development. They analyse the outcomes for the students and offer suitable challenge to the school.

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

- Increase equality of opportunity – good
- Strengthen leadership and management – good

### **External support**

External support from the school improvement partner and local authority is reducing as the leadership and staff at the school become more self-reliant in taking improvement forwards. The support that is still in place is well focused and has aided the good progress made since the last monitoring visit. The local authority's evaluation of progress and of the quality of provision is accurate. Local authority personnel recognise the need for the school to demonstrate that the current quality of provision and improved outcomes for students are sustainable.