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Mr Graham Sacks
Headteacher
Beachcroft School
111 Shirland Road
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Dear Mr Sacks

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Beachcroft School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected the unit on Wednesday 23 March 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please convey my thanks to the teachers and pupils whose lessons I visited and who spoke to me about their work. Thank you also to the recently appointed executive headteacher who took the time to share information on the future of alternative provision across the area.

Since the inspection, the close working of the local authority with a neighbouring borough has brought about changes to the management structure of the unit. An executive headteacher has been appointed. There are also well advanced future plans to rationalise alternative provision across the two authorities. It is intended that Beachcroft will play a significant part in this future development.

As a result of the inspection on 22 and 23 March 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The pupils' rate of progress is satisfactory overall. Because of short-term placements and limited information from referring institutions, it is far from straightforward for the unit to show significant academic progress for all pupils. What is clear is that the short-term interventions result in a high proportion of successful re-integrations into



mainstream settings. Information on the pupils' attendance indicates good progress for many and an overall improvement in attendance of 10 percentage points compared with the unit's figures at the same time last year. Fixed-term exclusions from the unit have also reduced by close to 50% when compared with the data from the previous year. The pupils' attainment remains well below average but the internal information on the pupils' achievement certificates indicates that almost all are making at least adequate academic progress.

The unit has had some success in improving the quality of teaching although there is still too much variability in the quality of the pupils' classroom experience. In the five part lessons seen, teaching and learning ranged from good to inadequate. The school's progress towards ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching is still hindered by the challenges in recruiting permanent high quality staff. Such difficulties have been exacerbated by earlier uncertainties over the unit's future.

There are examples of good classroom practice which the unit is striving to share across all staff, be they short- or long-term appointments. This is most clearly seen in the encouraging in-depth planning evident in lesson plans. However, the range of experience and expertise of staff is still affecting the way the good planning is implemented in classrooms. Pupils most enjoy the lessons where they have a number of short-term tasks, carefully differentiated, as in one life-skills lesson, or where they can work practically as in art and cookery. Future plans for the area alternative provision have the potential to help the recruitment and retention challenge faced by the unit because of long-term improved career opportunities. However, in the short term, uncertainties as to the progress of this initiative have made it more difficult to recruit permanent staff.

The unit has striven to promote community cohesion beyond its immediate neighbourhood in so far as it is possible with both its intake and resources. To this end, it has registered with the British Council schools twinning programme. It has also taken advantage of a range of other resources such as those planned for the Olympics. Residential opportunities to other parts of the United Kingdom are also planned but are dependent on available financial resources.

The senior leadership of the unit has been considerably strengthened by the appointment of an experienced inclusion manager. It is also well supported by the executive headteacher, appointed to oversee the new alternative provision across the area. The expansion of the leadership team has extended its capacity considerably and, in consequence, strengthened the unit's progress towards sustaining further improvement. This is clearly demonstrated in the current work to improve teaching and learning, in the careful monitoring and evaluation of the unit's work, in the developments in the personalised curriculum, and in the motivation and enthusiasm of the staff to move onto the next stage of the unit's development. The satisfactory rather than good progress in addressing the areas for improvement from the last inspection results mainly from external factors influencing the unit.

The local authority, through its area-wide initiative with the adjacent borough, is providing good support for the unit. The latest internal review documentation demonstrates a perceptive analysis of the issues and improvements within the unit.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Recruit and retain high quality staff.
- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure greater consistency in the learning and progress made by pupils, particularly by improving the challenge for the full range of ability and by ensuring that pupils do not determine the pace of teaching.
- Sharpen planning for the promotion of community cohesion beyond the school and the local community.