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Mr Stainton  
Cheshunt School  
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Dear Mr Stainton

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Cheshunt School**

Following my visit to your school on 5 May 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2010. 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.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed following discussion with the lead HMI and on submission of an appropriate support programme.

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 Hertfordshire.

Yours sincerely

*David Jones*  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2010.**

- Raise achievement as a matter of urgency by:
  - ensuring that all teachers use the available information on students' prior attainment and individual targets to plan lessons that provide an appropriate level of challenge for each student in the class
  - ensuring that intervention programmes tackle all forms of underachievement, including that of the most-able students and students with special educational needs but without a statement
  - improving attendance, so that all students maximise their learning time.
  
- Within a year, improve the quality of teaching to ensure that each student experiences a coherent programme of learning from Year 7 to Year 11 by:
  - improving the organisation and planning of programmes of study within subjects
  - ensuring that all teachers have a good level of subject knowledge and can use a range of teaching approaches that give students an active role in their learning and promote good behaviour
  - improving teachers' skills in assessing students' levels of understanding during the course of a lesson, so they can adapt their teaching approaches accordingly.
  
- Increase the pace of school improvement by:
  - using a wider range of performance indicators to set improvement targets and to monitor progress towards achieving them
  - involving a wider range of stakeholders in rigorous self-evaluation
  - ensuring that staff at all levels are held to account by their line managers and that senior leaders are held to account for the school's performance by the governing body
  - meeting the school's statutory duties in relation to equality.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Cheshunt School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 5 May 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. HMI conducted a staff meeting; he explained the special measures monitoring process and outlined the priorities for improvement evident following the first day of the inspection.

#### **Context**

The headteacher took up his post ten weeks before the inspection that placed the school in special measures. The head of sixth form and the head of learning zone left at Easter 2011, as did three other teachers. At the beginning of the summer term, the special educational needs coordinator assumed responsibility for the learning zone and the head of geography assumed responsibility for the sixth form.

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

The 2010 examination results exhibited the same pattern of decline that had been evident in previous years. At the time of the last inspection, the school was unable to provide evidence of current student progress. A new commercial assessment database is being developed and this carries appropriate information to inform teachers' planning and senior management decisions. Evidence from this embryonic system indicates that the students' current progress has improved; this is supported by the most recent modular examination outcomes and early-entry GCSE results which are more positive than similar results in 2010. HMI will conduct a detailed review of the 2011 results as part of the autumn term monitoring visit.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection.

- Raise achievement as a matter of urgency by:
  - ensuring that all teachers use the available information on students' prior attainment and individual targets to plan lessons that provide an appropriate level of challenge for each student in the class
  - ensuring that intervention programmes tackle all forms of underachievement, including that of the most-able students and students with special educational needs but without a statement – **satisfactory**.

## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

During this inspection, the students' behaviour and attitude to learning were generally positive. Many are compliant even when the work provided failed to fully engage their attention. However, small numbers of students exhibited immature behaviour and a few were deliberately disrespectful to their peers. Movement around the school is usually calm.

The school has developed a clear system to track and monitor behaviour which provides detailed information. Although this system is not fully embedded, the 'on call' system and internal isolation room are carefully managed and provide effective support to classroom teachers. Exclusions continue to fall; however, some groups are over represented, notably boys and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The learning zone has been remodelled and it is intended that students have the opportunity to review and question their own behaviour; however, this is yet to take place.

Whilst there are some senior staff on duty before, during and after school, subject area leaders and other staff are rarely seen in the corridors at the change of lesson, and student movement is not appropriately supervised. On the first day of the inspection, punctuality was poor with 15% of the school population late for morning registration; only 60% of those who were late were recorded as such on the school's systems. Some groups of students were slow to clear from public areas and the school field at end of break and lunch time. The morning registration and tutorial period is not valued by students. When inspectors visited these sessions they were generally calm social gatherings providing little of educational value. Attendance has risen and increasingly robust systems have been implemented; however, levels of absence vary notably between year groups.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection.

- Improve attendance, so that all students maximise their learning time – **inadequate**.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

Inspectors visited 39 lessons and conducted joint observations with senior staff; the views they expressed concurred with the judgements given by inspectors. Where teaching was good, the lesson was well-planned and the teachers' questioning helped maintain the pace of learning. Some of these effective lessons had a strong focus on building subject literacy and used resources well; however, a few of the most successful lessons missed the opportunity to build outstanding learning. In an

outstanding athletics lesson, the boys knew exactly what was expected of them and accepted responsibilities maturely. Their accurate peer evaluation skills were used to drive forward learning and raise standards. The boys' evaluation of their peers' performance was thoughtful and accurate, becoming the key factor in the outstanding learning that evolved. The physical education department use criteria based assessment effectively.

Where teaching was less demanding, some tasks failed to engage the students fully whilst some lessons did not provide clear guidance as to what was required to secure the highest levels. In these lessons, the teachers' subject knowledge and grasp of the examination board requirements were not sufficiently well-developed to drive forward learning; these lessons required a greater focus on what students were expected to learn rather than what they were expected to do.

In those lessons where learning was inadequate, tasks were inappropriate to the students' learning needs or the teachers' questioning skills and explanations failed to help students make progress. Too many lessons ended prematurely; some classes were dismissed eight minutes early. These early dismissals disrupted learning in nearby lessons.

The use of assessment to improve learning has been enhanced by the introduction of a standardised planning format and the range of assessment data that has recently become available. HMI will conduct a review of the use of assessment to evaluate student progress with heads of department at the next monitoring visit.

A well considered change to the Year 7 and 8 curriculum is planned for September 2011. It has a strong focus on core skills and provides three distinct pathways to ensure equality of access.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection.

- Within a year, improve the quality of teaching to ensure that each student experiences a coherent programme of learning from Year 7 to Year 11 by:
  - improving the organisation and planning of programmes of study within subjects
  - ensuring that all teachers have a good level of subject knowledge and can use a range of teaching approaches that give students an active role in their learning and promote good behaviour
  - improving teachers' skills in assessing students' levels of understanding during the course of a lesson, so they can adapt their teaching approaches accordingly - **satisfactory**.

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

The headteacher was new in post at the time of the last inspection. He and his senior leadership team have taken a number of appropriate policy decisions on lesson planning, the use of assessment, staffing levels, attendance and curriculum change. The budget has been secured, behaviour improved and exclusions reduced. Some improvement in attendance has been secured. The monitoring and evaluation of student progress has improved noticeably and an efficient computer-based system has been established. All of these policy developments are at an early operational stage and have yet to impact on standards, although early-entry examination data shows evidence of some improvement. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by senior staff is accurate. An appropriate range of curriculum enhancements have been offered to students from September 2011 and senior staff are already reviewing how these can be developed further to raise standards.

The use of time in the school day requires urgent attention. The changeover between lessons lacks a definitive structure; as a result, many students miss up to 20 minutes a day of their lessons, potentially over 1.5 hours per week. This loss of teaching time hinders student progress.

The limited contribution of some subject areas to standards and achievement was one of the concerns expressed in the last inspection. HMI will discuss the school's plans to improve this with the appropriate subject area leaders at the next monitoring visit.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection.

- Increase the pace of school improvement by:
  - using a wider range of performance indicators to set improvement targets and to monitor progress towards achieving them
  - involving a wider range of stakeholders in rigorous self-evaluation
  - ensuring that staff at all levels are held to account by their line managers and that senior leaders are held to account for the school's performance by the governing body
  - meeting the school's statutory duties in relation to equality - **satisfactory**.

## **External support**

The local authority statement of action was clear, and the support provided has been effective. A good mix of consultancy, human resources support and school improvement partner challenge is helping to develop leadership at many levels. Financial support from the local authority is allowing the school to buy into support from a well-respected National Leader of Education.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Review the use of time in the school day and ensure that all lessons last for the scheduled time.
  
- Address punctuality at the start of the school day.