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Mrs J Churcher
Headteacher
The Vyne Community School
Vyne Road
Basingstoke
RG21 5 PB

Dear Mrs Churcher

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Vyne Community School

Following my visit with Veronica Young, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 June 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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.

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 Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- In order to raise students' attainment, accelerate their progress by:
 - ensuring that weaknesses in their writing skills are identified and tackled effectively
 - monitoring students' written work and giving them precise strategies for improving it.
- Raise the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - lessons are planned to meet students' individual needs, based on assessment of their abilities and need
 - students are offered a variety of activities that enhance their motivation and interests in all subjects
 - effective teaching strategies, apparent in some subjects, are used widely across the school.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
 - improving the accuracy of evaluation and planning
 - setting a clear long-term vision for the future of the school.

Special measures: monitoring of The Vyne Community School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 June 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, groups of pupils, groups of teachers and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Several staff have left the school since the last monitoring visit. This includes the headteacher. The head of another secondary school in the town was approached by the local authority to become the acting headteacher at The Vyne. She took up post in March. At the time of the resignation of the previous headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body also resigned and has been replaced.

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

The most recent public examination results are as reported in the September 2010 inspection report. Teacher assessments of students' achievements indicate that standards are expected to be a little higher at GCSE in 2011 than in 2010. Progress in the lessons observed during this monitoring inspection was inconsistent but much improved on that found during the last visit. Inadequate progress is now rare. Inspectors observed one lesson where the rate of learning was inadequate. Learning was good in a little over half of the lessons seen. A legacy of underachievement has led to too many students still working below national expectations for each age group. This is illustrated through tracking data showing the attainment of current Year 7 students to be similar to that found in Year 9. Progress still needs to accelerate sharply in order to close the gap.

The last monitoring visit noted the significant improvements in the availability of data on the progress of students. Improvements have continued. These data are now being used to identify underachievement in a much more systematic and effective way. The rigour of the implementation varies between subjects but at a strategic level the most obvious underachievement is identified by senior leaders at an early stage. As a result there is evidence of interventions having a highly positive impact on raising students' achievement.

There has been good progress in promoting literacy across the curriculum. All departments have been trained and teachers from different subjects were able to give examples of how they contribute to literacy through their subjects. Good work in this area was seen, for example, in a very effective music lesson. A good start has been made but staff need further help to differentiate between pupils with special needs and those with low levels of literacy. One-to-one support for students is working well, but teaching assistants are not yet confident in using literacy techniques to support students in the classroom.

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

- Ensuring that weaknesses in students' writing skills are identified and tackled effectively – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

There have been significant and positive changes since the last monitoring visit affecting attendance and behaviour. The school is working hard to increase attendance, but while improved, it is still too low.

The new headteacher quickly established higher expectations of pupil behaviour. Messages to pupils and parents are more consistent and rigorous. Procedures to authorise absence have become streamlined. A more obvious senior staff presence has led to more orderly conduct in corridors. The reduction in poor teaching has led to better behaviour and attendance in lessons, with a 30% reduction in internal truancy since the last visit. The meeting and greeting of pupils at the beginning of the school day helps establish good relations while enforcing expectations of school uniform. Systems leading to exclusions are better controlled and the number of exclusions has reduced markedly. While teachers are very positive about improvements in behaviour, some still see the duty of tackling behaviour out of classrooms as belonging to senior staff rather than sharing the responsibility. All teachers now participate in duty teams at the start of the school day. Progress in improving behaviour and attendance is good.

The effectiveness of provision

A combination of robust action to remove ineffective teachers and the school's professional development programme has led to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching. Teachers continue to plan lessons with objectives that all students must reach, further objectives for some more able students and more stretching objectives for the most able. This is having a more positive impact on the lessons than during the last visit.

At the time of the last visit teaching was judged to be good or better in just under one third of the lessons observed. Fewer lessons were observed during this visit but of those observed just over one half were judged to be good or better and the

number of lessons where teaching was judged to be inadequate had fallen from six to one. This reflects the school's self-evaluation of the quality of teaching, where just over half the teaching is judged to be at least good, with a small but significant tail of inadequate teaching that is being tackled.

The system of teacher advocates is having a positive impact on raising the quality of teaching. Currently, advocates work with identified staff, spreading good practice through coaching and peer observation. There is scope for this to become a more routine element of professional development. Many good examples were seen of effective marking. However, practice is inconsistent, as is the monitoring of marking, where comments from teachers are not always followed through.

Reflecting the school's specialism, the performing arts continue to be beacons of excellent provision.

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

- Monitoring students' written work and giving them precise strategies for improving it – satisfactory.
- Raise the quality of teaching – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The arrival of a new acting headteacher in March has been a catalyst for a significant move forward in the school's improvement. She has effectively communicated to staff, parents and students a clear vision for improvement and instilled a sense of pride in belonging to the school. The vast majority of staff are positive about changes and support the headteacher. Importantly, she has empowered senior leaders to fulfil their roles and streamlined accountability and decision making. Robust action has been taken to tackle inadequate teaching. While monitoring and accountability have improved further this term, there remains a small number of areas where the comprehensiveness and robustness of line-management need to be enhanced. Governance has improved further and governors asked pertinent questions following the previous monitoring visit.

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

- Increase the impact of leadership and management – good.

External support

The local authority's vital contribution since the last monitoring visit has been to ensure a smooth and speedy transition between headteachers and ensure that highly effective leadership was identified and put in place quickly. Advisors continue

to support the school. The appointment of an acting headteacher from a local school has the added advantage of increasing partnership opportunities.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching by eradicating inadequate teaching and increasing still further the proportion of teaching that is at least good.
- Encourage all teachers to see the promotion of good behaviour around the school as their personal responsibility.
- Continue the good work to reduce the rate of both overall and persistent absenteeism.
- Build more consistency into middle leadership structures to ensure clarity of accountability in all subject areas.