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14 July 2011

Mr B Evans  
Headteacher  
Notton House School  
28 Notton  
Lacock  
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Wiltshire  
SN15 2NF

Dear Mr Evans

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Notton House School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 July 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 January 2011. 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 to work in the school.

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 and Young People's Services for Bristol City Council.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2011**

- Improve students' achievements and progress by:
  - taking effective action to improve attendance
  - ensuring that the amount of time for teaching meets recommendations
  - ensuring that students in Key Stage 3 study all subjects within the National Curriculum
  - ensuring all students have equal access to the range of experiences within the curriculum
  - improving the planning and monitoring of the curriculum, including in off-site provision, to ensure provision is of a high quality
  - establishing systems to develop and monitor the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
  
- Improve standards in English by:
  - ensuring that teachers' lesson planning provides students with a range of experiences that improve their skills
  - ensuring teaching is consistently of a good quality
  - ensuring that the progress of those students with low literacy skills is monitored effectively to make sure they are making the progress they should.
  
- Improve behaviour by fully embedding the new systems for managing and improving students' behaviour.
  
- Improve the impact of the governing body by ensuring it fulfils its role in challenging the school to address weaknesses and support its improvement.
  
- Meet all National Minimum Standards for boarding.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Notton House School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 13 July 2011**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work including four lessons, scrutinised documents, held discussions with pupils and staff, met with the Chair of the Governing Body and had a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority. The residential provision was not inspected on this visit.

#### **Context**

Since the last inspection a new coordinator for English has been appointed and the positions of two teachers on long-term sick leave have been covered by temporary appointments. Year 11 students have recently left the school and as a consequence the roll has fallen to 31 students.

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

At the last inspection pupils' achievement was judged to be inadequate. Historically, students' attainment has been low with only a small number of students leaving school with GCSE passes at the end of Year 11. Almost all students enter the school with levels of literacy below those expected for their age. The last inspection judged that weak teaching resulted in students making inadequate progress in English. Evidence from the present inspection demonstrates that the quality of teaching has improved and that students are making better progress in improving their literacy skills. Lesson plans link closely with longer term units of work to provide a coherent curriculum. Activities are varied and capture students' interest. As a result, students try hard in lessons and occasional frustration is generally due to a misunderstanding of instructions rather than a desire not to work. Teaching assistants often provide individual support in lessons, explaining work to students and encouraging them to stay on task. Their specific knowledge of strategies to develop students' literacy skills is underdeveloped.

The school is currently developing its use of data to provide a more accurate picture of pupils' attainment and progress over time. Assessment information is being used to measure pupils' attainment against National Curriculum levels and students are involved in reviewing their progress. Information is not yet sufficiently refined to identify the specific difficulties of those who have the lowest levels of literacy and to plan in detail the next steps in their learning. The school has good plans to involve students more closely in setting their targets for improvement in mathematics, English and behaviour from September 2011.

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

- Improve standards in English by ensuring that teachers' lesson planning provides students with a range of experiences that improve their skills; and ensure that teaching is consistently of a good quality and the progress of those students with low literacy skills is monitored effectively to make sure they are making the progress they should – satisfactory.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

At the last inspection pupils' behaviour was judged to be inadequate. The more purposeful climate for learning in lessons has helped to reduce incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Although pupils do display challenging behaviour on some occasions, staff have received appropriate training on behaviour management and incidents are recorded as required. School data show that while the number of incidents requiring intervention has remained broadly unchanged, there has been a fall in the number of serious behavioural incidents and in the number of exclusions. A new reward system has been introduced which focuses on recognising positive behaviour which is generally liked by students. Attendance shows an improvement, although a small number of students have difficulty returning to school after a weekend at home.

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

- Improve behaviour by fully embedding the new systems for managing and improving students' behaviour – satisfactory

### **The effectiveness of provision**

Senior leaders have analysed data and reviewed attendance patterns. Discussions have taken place with the local authority regarding the suitability of some placements. As a result, a few pupils who had no wish to attend a boarding school and did not settle have been taken off the school roll, which has helped to improve the overall attendance figure. The length of taught time has been increased and, for those students who receive their education in the school, it now meets requirements. Students at Key Stage 3 benefit from a broader curriculum which reflects the National Curriculum and includes the study of geography and history. The school has not yet put in place a robust system for planning and monitoring the curriculum for the minority of older students who attend alternative education provision away from the school site. Consequently, it is unclear whether some of these students have access to an appropriate range of experiences. Senior leaders and the governing body are currently working with the local authority to review this provision.

The headteacher and senior leaders demonstrate a strong ambition to improve teaching and learning and to raise the achievement of pupils. Some leaders have only recently assumed their responsibilities and are still developing their roles, for

example in monitoring the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. However, they have identified appropriate priorities for development and have suitable plans for taking the school forward.

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

- Improve students' achievements and progress by taking effective action to improve attendance; ensuring that the amount of time for teaching meets recommendations; ensuring that students in Key Stage 3 study all subjects within the National Curriculum; ensuring all students have equal access to the range of experiences within the curriculum; improving the planning and monitoring of the curriculum, including in off-site provision, to ensure provision is of a high quality and establishing systems to develop and monitor the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum – satisfactory

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

The governing body has focused on improving its ability to challenge and monitor the work of the school. It has established a school improvement committee which meets each month to discuss the school's progress in tackling the weaknesses identified by the last inspection. It is receiving more detailed information on the quality of teaching and learning and on pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour. Some vacancies exist on the governing body and the planned structure of committees and the allocation of responsibilities to individual governors are not yet complete. Consequently, in some areas the governing body is still over-reliant on the headteacher and local authority officers to guide it in making decisions. However, the governing body has a better understanding of its role and it is beginning to demonstrate impact, for example through the recent review of the school's staffing structure.

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

- Improve the impact of the governing body by ensuring it fulfils its role in challenging the school to address weaknesses and support its improvement – satisfactory
- Meet all National Minimum Standards for boarding – this aspect of the school's work was not inspected on this visit.

### **External support**

The local authority's statement of action and action plan are fit for purpose. The plan has steered the school's work well and targets are generally being met within the prescribed timescale. The school has benefited from good external support which has included support from local authority school improvement officers, advanced skills teachers and subject advisers. The governing body has received helpful training from the local authority which has been tailored to the governors' specific requirements.