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4 November 2011

Mr B Evans
The Headteacher
Notton House School
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Dear Mr Evans

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Notton House School

Following my visit to your school on 3 November 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 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 second monitoring inspection on 3 November 2011

Evidence

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

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection three new members have joined the governing body and a review of the school's staffing structure has taken place. The position of one teacher on long-term sick leave continues to be covered by a supply teacher. The school roll remains stable at 30 students.

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

Students gained limited success in examinations taken at the end of Year 11 in 2011, which represents inadequate progress in relation to their starting points. Almost all have a history of disengagement from learning and have levels of literacy which are below that expected for their age. Since the beginning of the academic year more challenging courses have been introduced and expectations have been raised. Students are more aware of the level at which they are working and of their targets for improvement. School data predict students will gain a much higher success rate in GCSE examinations in 2012.

Students recognise the positive changes in the school and generally enjoy their learning. Evidence from observations during the monitoring inspection suggests teaching and students' progress in lessons are at least satisfactory. Students particularly enjoy lessons where they engage in practical activities and can make choices. The use of marking, and of assessment information to plan lessons, varies between classes. Staff are introducing appropriate systems to extend the use of targets and to involve students in assessing their progress.

The assessment of students' levels of literacy and communication has been completed to establish a baseline for measuring subsequent progress and to identify specific difficulties. Individual reading sessions have been introduced to help those students with the lowest levels of literacy, although it is too soon to establish their full impact. Senior staff recognise that a literacy policy is needed to ensure a more consistent approach to teaching literacy across the school.

Progress since the last monitoring 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;

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

A more purposeful atmosphere for learning exists in lessons and students generally behave sensibly around the school. Staff demonstrate effective behaviour management skills. Occasional incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with calmly and are not allowed to disrupt the learning of other students. Incidents are recorded appropriately and reviewed by senior leaders. The improvement in students' behaviour is demonstrated by a sharp reduction in the frequency of serious incidents of misbehaviour and in the number of exclusions.

The reward system is implemented consistently and students feel it motivates them to try hard and to behave. Students enjoy the rewards which include trips to the cinema and a leisure centre. They feel that their views are considered and report that the school council has become more effective in the past year.

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

- improve behaviour by fully embedding the new systems for managing and improving students' behaviour – good.

The effectiveness of provision

Attendance for the large majority of students shows a marked improvement since the beginning of the current academic year. A small number of students, particularly in the alternative education provision, have an unduly high level of absence, although their attendance shows an improvement when compared with that for the previous academic year. Senior leaders are analysing data effectively to monitor the attendance of individuals and groups of students. The school works closely with social workers and the education welfare service to support those students who have complex social needs.

The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Students report they generally enjoy learning and recognise how the range of activities provided has improved. The school has established arrangements for managing the alternative education provision accessed by some older students away from the school site. The educational and social programme provided is set out in detail and evidence suggests it has been successful in engaging students with a history of disaffection from school. However, links with the rest of the school-based Key Stage 4 curriculum to ensure appropriate breadth and balance are underdeveloped.

Senior leaders monitor teaching and learning and numeracy and literacy coordinators have appropriate plans to develop further their subjects. Systems for monitoring

learning do not have a sharp enough focus on evaluating and promoting the development of literacy skills across the curriculum.

Progress since the last monitoring 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 been strengthened with the inclusion of some new and more experienced members. It is more aware of its role in challenging the school and in holding it to account. The headteacher and senior leaders have a better understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement based on the more accurate collection and analysis of data relating to students' behaviour and academic progress. The governing body receives detailed information on the school's performance and has received presentations from staff on aspects of the curriculum. A committee to review the school's progress in tackling the key areas for improvement is working closely with the headteacher and with local authority officers. A review of the school's staffing structure has taken place which has helped to balance the budget. Appropriate plans are in place to raise the governing body's first-hand knowledge of the school through focused visits and to extend the committee structure to cover other aspects of the school's work.

Progress since the last monitoring 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 continues to provide a good quality of support. The contribution of the local authority school improvement officers to the school's regular progress reviews has helped to ensure an accurate assessment of progress. Staff have particularly benefited from the support of the school psychology service to improve the management of students' behaviour and from advice from a visiting consultant on the assessment of students' special educational needs. The governing body has received support from the Governor Development Service and personnel advice to help with the review of the school's staffing structure. The school receives additional financial support whilst the number of students on roll is below capacity.