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17 November 2011

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

Dear Mrs Churcher

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Vyne Community School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 third 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 – good
Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed. Should the school wish to consider such an appointment before the next monitoring visit, the headteacher may discuss this with me.

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 third monitoring inspection on 16 November 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, a group of students and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Reductions in staffing have been made since April 2011. Some staff have resigned in order to take up other jobs and have not been replaced. In total, 19 staff who were at The Vyne in April 2011 are no longer part of the staff and nine have been appointed, which includes four teachers, two being on a temporary contract.

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

Attainment, as represented by the summer 2011 GCSE examination results, reflected the legacy of underachievement. However, the decline in five higher level GCSE passes including English and mathematics has been arrested, and there was a small improvement in the proportion of students who gained this. Attainment was a little above floor targets. There was substantial improvement in attainment in mathematics resulting from improved teaching and successful intervention strategies. English results fell well below the school's expectations. The reasons have been identified and good work is now in place to ensure greater success for the current Year 11. For example, on the day of the inspection, 39 Year 11 students were attending English enhancement classes after the official end of the school day. Reflecting the school's specialist status, students continue to achieve well in performing arts. Overall, there was too much inconsistency in the performance of different subjects.

The school's internal monitoring shows students' progress to be improving, and records of teaching show good progress being made in lessons. This is backed up by significant interventions to raise the achievement of identified individuals and reduce the gap in achievement between boys and girls. Current monitoring information indicates a substantial rise in the proportions of students in Year 11 making expected progress.

The good work reported in the last monitoring letter in improving literacy across the curriculum is continuing to have a positive impact on students' writing skills, although this impact came too late to improve last summer's English results. Literacy targets are explicit in schemes of work across the curriculum.

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

The positive improvements in behaviour and attendance reported in the last monitoring letter have continued and become more pronounced. A comparison of attendance rates for September and October 2011 with the same months last year shows clear improvement and the number of persistent absences has reduced sharply. Tighter procedures in school such as the introduction of an additional registration time with form tutors, as well as improved partnership work with parents and carers, have had a very positive impact. There remains a need to further improve punctuality at the beginning of the day.

Behaviour has greatly improved and the school is transformed from the time of the first monitoring visit. There are now consistent approaches to behaviour management. Far fewer students are out of lessons, and if they are, then teachers at all levels of seniority are much more likely to challenge them. The number of exclusions has fallen significantly. In both behaviour and attendance, there continues to be good improvement.

The effectiveness of provision

There has been a substantial improvement in the quality of teaching. The school's assessment of teaching, which has been validated by external support, indicates that two thirds of lessons are good. Robust action has been taken so that, while inadequate lessons are occasionally observed, repeat observations ensure that there are no endemic weaknesses in the teaching staff. A programme of mandatory professional development has been embraced by staff. Students report that, while lessons still vary in quality, overall teaching has improved so that now, as one student put it, they 'never experience a bad one'. Teachers' planning has greatly improved. Assessment has improved so that students know how they are doing and what they need to do to gain higher grades.

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

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management

As reported in the last monitoring letter, the arrival of the interim headteacher has been transformational. There now exists a clear vision for the school which is

articulated at all levels of leadership. As one senior leader commented, 'We are enabled to do leading rather than managing.' The impact of improved leadership can now be seen in the improved outcomes reported above. Further robust action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching. Monitoring has been followed through so that, for example, lesson observations track improvement in the performance of individual teachers. Performance objectives at all levels are now focused on the progress of students.

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

- increase the impact of leadership and management – good.

External support

The local authority continues to closely monitor the school. Additionally, the interim headteacher has used her own networks to engage the support of advanced skills teachers from other schools. A powerful example of the impact of this work can be seen in the improved attainment in mathematics.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further improve the effectiveness of monitoring to reduce the variation in performance between different subjects.
- Raise still further the proportion of good teaching to accelerate student progress.
- Build on the successful work in improving attendance to more rigorously enforce punctuality in the mornings.