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Mrs Melsa Buxton
Executive Headteacher
The Fountains High School
Bitham Lane
Stretton, Burton-on-Trent
DE13 0HB

Dear Mrs Buxton

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The Fountains High School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 23 February 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Could I also ask you to pass on my thanks to the students I met, who made me feel very welcome in your school.

As a result of the inspection on 29 November 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Since the previous inspection, the school has become a foundation school as part of The Burton Community Learning Trust with several local mainstream primary schools and the federated primary special school. The leadership of the school has also been restructured with new appointments to team leader roles, covering the three areas of Key Stages 3 and 4, Key Stage 5 and complex needs. Students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties are now educated alongside other students with complex needs.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The progress that students make in lessons and over time has improved significantly since the previous inspection. In some lessons observed during this visit, students made outstanding gains in their learning. They have clear targets which they work towards and these are used well by staff to monitor their achievement. During lessons, staff plan for a wide range of activities which promote students' skills in both independence and socialisation. School systems for the collection and use of

data have been reviewed and amended, so that it is now easier to identify where support is needed. This has enabled teachers and other staff to challenge the students more effectively and ensure that they are making at least good progress, with some making outstanding progress over time. The curriculum has developed further since the previous inspection and students now play a part in deciding which subjects are to be studied in the cross-curricular topics and theme days. The changes to the staffing structure means that middle leaders are now held more to account for the progress students make in each lesson and key stage. The introduction of several initiatives, such as personal learning and thinking skills and a framework for the teaching of literacy, have helped staff to focus on teaching a wider range of skills. The involvement of teaching assistants in planning and assessing students' work has also contributed to the raised levels of achievement. There is more consistency of approach across different types of staff. The impact of extra support provided is monitored carefully for the impact it has on students' learning and progress.

The quality of teaching

Since the previous inspection, senior and middle leaders have continued to accurately monitor the quality of teaching in the school. This has resulted in effective action being taken to improve the overall quality of teaching in the school. Where appropriate, staff have been moved to teach in different areas and with different students. As a result, and due to the group changes, the concerns raised in the inspection around the provision for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties have been tackled extremely effectively and outstanding teaching was seen in the classes where these students are taught. The school's evidence shows that this improvement is a trend over time.

Generally, there is more good and outstanding teaching in the school than at the time of the previous inspection. Staff are more analytical in their work and are focused on how to improve learning for all students. The improved assessment schemes have allowed more training to be provided so that staff can better understand their place in the assessment processes and how they can better evaluate the learning taking place. There is now a clearer understanding of how assessment can be used to support students' learning in all lessons. Target setting is more robust and students have a range of targets that they work towards. This allows staff to contribute more effectively to monitoring the progress of students as the outcomes for their learning are clear and well understood by all. Closer scrutiny of students' targets also allows teachers to plan more varied and exciting activities in their lessons which meet the needs of all students.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students clearly enjoy their time in the school. They behave well in lessons and around the school. There are strong relationships among all members of the school community and there were many examples seen in lessons and at break and

lunchtimes of students helping and supporting each other very effectively. In the better lessons, the combination of individual and group activities showed that students are increasingly able to work independently or collaboratively in groups. A strong example of this was seen in a mathematics lesson where the three groups of students were working on tasks appropriate to their needs. There was a high level of challenge so that students were expected to discuss their learning and how they reached solutions. In these activities, students' behaviour played a significant part in moving learning on. School leaders, supported by all staff, are aware of the need to develop students' personal skills and awareness of the wider community. They do this successfully in a variety of ways, including through trips in to the local community where the school is held in high regard.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

Senior leaders, led by the dynamic and well-respected executive headteacher, have a very clear and accurate awareness of the strengths of the school. They have detailed plans in place to improve the school and have introduced several significant changes to the school's structures and procedures. Accountability for the performance of the school is increasingly distributed, so that more staff are now aware of the part they play in contributing to school improvement and the raising of achievement. There is more accountability at different tiers of staff for the performance of students in their areas. Middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning within their teams and are increasingly able to use data to identify where students need extra support.

The governing body, which is shared with the partner primary special school, has been through significant turbulence since the previous inspection and valuable time was lost in addressing the issues identified at that time. However, the new Chair of the Governing Body, who has been in post for less than a year, has worked hard to re-establish a committee structure and identify named governors to monitor and report on different areas of the school's work. This has allowed the governing body to sow the seeds of holding the school to account, although this is in its infancy.

The local authority has provided support to the governing body to help them in rectifying many of the issues identified in the last inspection. The school's change to foundation status has served to strengthen partnerships with other schools in the local area. The partnership with the school's partner primary special school has also helped to share best practice between the schools.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Muir
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching by ensuring that:
 - students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
 - staff have consistently high expectations of students' ability to work independently
 - evaluation of teaching takes full account of the progress students are making.

- Enhance the provision for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties by ensuring that:
 - students are set challenging and achievable targets
 - there are more frequent opportunities for students to learn alongside and socialise with those of a similar age
 - there is effective communication with parents and carers.

- Improve governance by ensuring that all members of the governing body:
 - are directly involved in setting priorities for improvement
 - play their part in evaluating, first-hand, the work of the school.