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Mr B Evans
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Evans

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Notton House School

Following my visit to your school on 22 and 23 February 2012, 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 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 which 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 third monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 February 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including eight lessons, scrutinised documents and held discussions with pupils, parents and carers, staff, and two members of the governing body. A visit was also made to the school's off-site centre in Bristol and discussions were held with providers of alternative vocational education. The residential provision was not inspected on this visit.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection three new members have joined the governing body and changes in the school's leadership structure have taken place. The position of one teacher on long-term sick leave continues to be covered by a supply teacher. The school roll has increased from 30 to 38 students.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The scrutiny of students' work and the learning observed in lessons show students are making better progress, particularly in English and mathematics.

School assessment data predict students will gain higher results in examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2012 than they did in the previous year. Students in Year 10 and Year 11 who attend the off-site centre enjoy the vocational courses and appreciate how they are learning skills which prepare them for future employment. An accredited course which recognises students' gains in independence and social skills is provided and some students also complete a sports leadership course which helps to promote their self-confidence. However, not all students at Key Stage 4 are able to access the vocational options and the achievement of a few students is limited by the range of examination courses provided. The school recognises this, and has appropriate plans to provide additional GCSE or equivalent courses, for example in food technology and physical education.

The English coordinator has raised the profile of English and she is monitoring more effectively teaching of the subject across the school. Training has been provided for staff and literacy activities included in the planning for other subjects. A good example was seen during the inspection of literacy skills being developed in a history lesson on Victorian Britain. Students were reminded in advance of the grammar they would need to use when preparing written responses to the questions. The literacy skills of all students have been assessed and students with particular difficulties given additional targeted support, often on a one-to-one basis. Appropriate systems are in place to monitor students' acquisition of literacy skills. New resources have

been introduced which support the development of early reading skills. These initiatives have good potential, although it is too soon to evaluate the full impact on students' progress.

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

- Improve standards in English – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving as teachers demonstrate greater confidence in managing students' behaviour and are able to focus more on students' learning. Good teaching is characterised by a clear explanation of what students are expected to learn, regular checks to ensure that they understand the task, and by students being given time to learn from their mistakes and to explore different ways of completing the activity. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, it is often because lesson planning does not focus sufficiently on what students are expected to learn from the lesson. The overall quality of teaching is also affected by absence through sickness and by temporary cover arrangements.

Behaviour and safety

Systems for promoting positive behaviour are working well across the school. Students display positive attitudes to work in lessons and are pleased to talk about their work. The reward system and the end of day assembly, when pupils celebrate each other's successes, are successful in promoting students' self-esteem and their positive behaviour. Students who attend the off-site centre respond positively to the work-place environment established on the vocational courses. They are closely involved in reviewing their progress each week and in setting targets for further improvement, which helps students to take more responsibility for their learning and behaviour. Opportunities to maximise the potential of this approach are sometimes missed because the behaviour targets for some students are rather broad and are not linked to developing specific social skills. The school keeps detailed records and analyses data on behavioural incidents. Information shows the frequency of serious incidents of misbehaviour and the number of exclusions continues to fall.

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 quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher provides a clear direction for the school. He is ably supported by the reorganised senior leadership team which has developed a sharper focus on improving students' learning and achievement. Assessment data are being used

more thoroughly to check students' progress and to identify those who are falling behind. Data show attendance has improved when compared with the same period last year. Staff at the off-site centre have worked successfully with students and with their families to improve attendance. The small number of parents and carers spoken to during the visit appreciated the support they received from the school.

The school provides the required amount of time for teaching and all subjects of the National Curriculum are covered at Key Stage 3. The planning for some subjects, for example history and geography, is not complete and does not ensure comprehensive coverage as students progress up the school. The off-site centre provides flexible programmes to meet students' individual needs with a strong focus on vocational courses. A few of the activities provided in the community have been set up quite recently and are not monitored closely or linked to accredited courses. The monitoring of literacy and numeracy has improved and coordinators continue to develop their subjects effectively.

The governing body is reviewing the performance of the school more effectively. Several governors have visited the school and have prepared reports on aspects of the school's work. The governing body has received training from the local authority which has helped improve its understanding of key areas of the school's work, for example students' progress. As a result, governors are now in a better position to hold the school to account and to ask more challenging questions about its performance. Actions have been taken to ensure that the school uses its resources efficiently and remains within budget, for example, the recent review of the leadership structure and the decision to delete the post of assistant headteacher.

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

- Improve students' achievements and progress – satisfactory
- Improve the impact of the governing body – good
- 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 level of support. Advice on the development of literacy, the management of students' behaviour and on the assessment and analysis of students' progress has been particularly effective. The school is working with other special schools in the local authority to develop aspects of the curriculum. The governing body has benefited from good support which has strengthened its ability to challenge the school's performance.