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9 July 2012

Ms E Churton
Principal
Hanson School
Sutton Avenue
Swain House Road
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD2 1JP

Dear Ms Churton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hanson School

Following my visit with Kathleen Harris, Additional Inspector, and Robert Birtwell, Additional Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 July 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

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 Strategic Director – Services to Children & Young People for Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Briggs
Lead inspector

January 2012



Annex

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

- Raise attainment and improve achievement across the school, but especially in mathematics and English by:
 - improving the quality of teaching to ensure that more lessons are at least good
 - recognising the different needs of students, particularly boys, and tailoring lessons to meet these needs more effectively
 - providing all students with sufficient challenge and support in lessons to achieve their best
 - improving the consistency and accuracy of assessment so that students are clear about what they need to do to improve
 - improving behaviour, attendance and punctuality to lessons.

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body take responsibility and are accountable for:
 - developing and sharing a vision for the school's improvement and sustaining the momentum to achieve this
 - monitoring the school's work rigorously and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses accurately to provide a secure basis for coherent improvement planning
 - developing and delivering a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum at Key Stage 3 that provides a full entitlement for students and meets statutory requirements, including those for religious education
 - ensuring that learning programmes are planned to progressively develop skills, acquire knowledge and promote understanding
 - developing the skills of all leaders so that they can accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and take the necessary action to tackle underperformance and share good practice.

Special measures: monitoring of Hanson School

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 July 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 43 part lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the newly appointed Principal, the associate Principal, the associate vice-Principal and other key staff. In addition, discussions were held with groups of students, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and two representatives from the local authority.

Inspectors also scrutinised the school's records for the safe recruitment and vetting of staff and checked that the school is meeting statutory requirements in respect of safeguarding.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in March 2012, there have been further changes in staffing. A vice-Principal and an assistant Principal have left the school. In consultation with the local authority and the incoming sponsor, the governors have appointed a substantive Principal who has taken up post. The associate Principal and associate vice-Principal are staying on until the end of the academic year in order to facilitate a smooth transition. In addition, several teachers including the head of mathematics are leaving the school and a range of new appointments have been made for September.

Hanson School was hoping to become an academy on 1 September 2011 but this continues to be deferred due to a series of issues. Consequently, the local authority remains the appropriate authority until the academy sponsor takes over at a date to be confirmed.

Achievement of students at the school

Attainment is rising and some aspects of students' achievement are improving. The predictions for examination results this year continue to rise as the school gains more secure evidence of GCSE passes in early entries for mathematics and English. The proportion of students who have already gained at least a C grade in GCSE mathematics is higher than the final figure of 2011. Girls are still being outperformed by boys in mathematics. School data show that more students are predicted to make the expected three levels of progress in English and considerably more in mathematics. The data also show that students with special educational needs are expected to attain better results in 2012. Nevertheless, the proportion of students likely to make the progress expected of them is significantly low, as it has been over previous years. Leaders still focus too much on the number of Year 11 students gaining a GCSE grade C rather than on how much progress students are making during their whole time in the school.

Inspection evidence shows that a higher proportion of lessons are resulting in students making good progress. Although reducing, there are still too many lessons where students do not make enough progress and, consequently, underachieve; this was particularly evident in mathematics. Students' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, although improving, remain worryingly insecure and continue to stifle their overall achievement. Achievement in the sixth form remains better than that in the main school.

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

- Raise attainment and improve achievement across the school, but especially in mathematics and English – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving. A higher proportion is now good, but too much remains inadequate and no outstanding teaching was observed. Consequently, teaching remains inconsistent throughout the school. This is still the key barrier to the overall improvement in the quality of learning. The strongest teaching continues to be found in the sixth form and in Key Stage 4.

Relationships between students and teachers are strong. As a result, most students have positive attitudes to learning which are exploited in the best lessons to engage them in collaborative learning. More teachers are planning work to meet the needs of all students. Some teachers utilise good questioning which allows for extended reasoned answers from the students. Subject knowledge is secure among teachers and confidently used to move off the lesson agenda to respond to the inquisitive mind of a child. Some teachers rely on extension work to stretch the more-able students, but this is often given after they have spent time completing the same work as everybody else rather than stretching them from the outset of the lesson. Often, planning for the needs of different students appears more bolt-on rather than built-in. A new lesson planning proforma is being piloted and was in use by many staff, but there is variability in the way lesson outcomes are defined.

While some teachers mark students' work for improvement regularly, all too often marking is cursory or non-existent. Incomplete work remains unchallenged in some cases and students are not given the focused direction in order to make the rapid gains in their learning needed to secure future improvement. Students in Years 7 and 8 were keen to point out that they do not like it when the best teachers are taken from them to give increased focus to Year 11 students. During the end of the spring term and early in the summer term, they say that they can often have a different teacher for their subject almost every lesson.

Behaviour and safety of students

Students' attitudes to learning are improving along with their conduct around the school and in most lessons. The number of exclusions is declining, but the use of the internal exclusion 'red room' has increased. Students say that being excluded to this room appears to increase

the status of the student with their classmates and is seen as a conquest. As on previous monitoring inspections, students' behaviour declines considerably when they are faced with lacklustre lessons that fail to engage them. There remain a number of teachers who struggle to maintain control of the behaviour of some students.

Students continue to feel safe in school and believe that there is someone they could turn to if they have a problem. However, younger students stated that not all teachers are approachable and that many of them would rather sort out their own problems first, before turning to an adult for help. Year 7 and 8 students were less positive about their overall experience in school compared to the views of older students.

Attendance is improving and the number of students who are persistently absent is reducing. The attendance of different groups of students is monitored and data show that pupil premium students (those from low-income families who are currently known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional funding) are not attending school as often as other students, especially in Year 9. Although improving, punctuality remains a major concern. Punctuality at the start of the day has improved but too many students still arrive late for lessons as they travel from one lesson to the next with a general lack of urgency.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The improvements to leadership and management at senior level identified at the last monitoring inspection have continued. The appointment of a substantive Principal and the benefit of her taking up post at short notice have given the leadership a sense of permanency previously missing. Nevertheless, with the departure of a vice-Principal and assistant Principal along with the head of mathematics, the school has not achieved the stability it so desperately seeks.

The school claims to have had a concerted and sustained focus on teaching and learning but the impact has been slow and hard won. However, a new lesson planning proforma, bespoke coaching of the weakest staff and focused training have resulted in an increase in good lessons. The new Principal has already started a robust programme of observations in order to establish a clear baseline.

Middle leaders have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring students achieve as well as possible. However, there is still some way to go before they hold the staff within their subject areas fully to account.

The governing body now holds leaders to account and continues to benefit from the detailed reports it receives from school leaders. Nevertheless, until the changes in leadership have been embedded, the school's capacity to improve remains fragile.

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

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body take responsibility and are accountable – satisfactory

External support

The school continues to receive good quality support from the local authority. This has been particularly effective from the school improvement service in providing high quality support to the many newly qualified teachers and the mathematics department. Through the local authority working closely with the incoming sponsor, they have been successful in securing funding to enable the new Principal to take up post early.