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2 July 2012

Mrs Perrulli
Headteacher
The Galsworthy School
Galsworthy Road
South Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE34 9UG

Dear Mrs Perrulli

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Galsworthy School

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 June 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2012. 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 – inadequate.

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 Corporate Director Children, Adults and Families for South Tyneside.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

Additional Inspector

January 2012



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2012

- Improve attendance by:
 - ensuring that the rewards for good attendance closely match students' interests and so are really valued by them
 - increasing the range of good quality alternative provision available and opportunities for education other than at the main site to engage more students in learning
 - establishing better partnerships with parents and carers before students join the school to ensure attendance targets are agreed
 - ensuring students, parents and carers are fully aware of the consequences of persistent absence and when targets are not met robust action is taken
 - enhancing extra-curricular activities so that they become an entitlement for all, rather than a reward for a minority.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that is consistently good in order to raise achievement, especially in English and mathematics by:
 - making targets for individual students more challenging and applying them in all subjects and lessons
 - developing the role of the subject leaders to ensure that literacy and numeracy are monitored, supported and promoted across all areas of the curriculum
 - extending the use of information and communication technology and independent learning so that students are more able to learn in situations outside traditional classroom settings
 - introducing a phonics-based approach to teaching literacy as soon as possible.

- Improve behaviour by:
 - ensuring that literacy and numeracy difficulties do not cause students to become frustrated and misbehave in lessons
 - establishing better transition arrangements with mainstream schools and the pupil referral unit, to ensure expectations of behaviour are known and previously successful strategies for support are in place
 - ensuring staff use the process of statutory assessment of special educational needs more effectively to gain advice on how extreme behaviour can be managed and prevented.

- Improve leadership by:
 - ensuring plans and self-evaluation documents always contain measurable targets and strategies to raise achievement for groups and individuals
 - ensuring that a simple and effective tracking system is put in place to monitor and improve academic achievement
 - establishing a mission for the school that is clear to all leaders and matches that of the behaviour and improvement partnership.

Special measures: monitoring of The Galsworthy School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 28 and 29 June 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and observed eight lessons. He scrutinised documents and students' work and met with most members of staff, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the associate headteacher. Discussions were also held with three members of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body. Informal discussions were held with several students.

Context

Since the inspection in February 2012 the substantive headteacher has taken early retirement. As a result of restructuring the senior leadership team, the deputy headteacher has been appointed as acting headteacher and one of the assistant headteachers has been appointed as acting deputy headteacher. Short-listing for the post of headteacher had just been completed at the time of the monitoring inspection and interviews are scheduled for early in the autumn term. An associate headteacher from a special school in a neighbouring authority is supporting the senior leaders on a part-time basis. Two new governors have joined the governing body. The school is due to relocate to new, purpose-built premises in January 2013, where it will be co-located with the local authority's pupil referral unit. Year 11 students were not in school at the time of the monitoring inspection, having completed their examinations the previous week.

Achievement of students at the school

In most of the lessons observed, students were seen to be making satisfactory progress. The work in their books and files, however, suggests that this situation is tenuous and not often sustained. There are too many gaps in students' work and what is recorded is often poorly presented and usually so brief that context is frequently lost. Because of this it is difficult for students to build upon prior learning and accelerate progress. In a few lessons, students in attendance were seen to be making good progress but in each instance there were as many students absent as there were present. This has an unfavourable impact on achievement. Systems for recording students' progress are emerging in mathematics but the data contained in records are often misleading and unreliable. An example of this is when the data suggest that students have made three National Curriculum levels of progress over the course of a term while attending very rarely. At the moment there are no compatible systems for comparing progress in different subjects, including English and mathematics. Accredited results for this year's leavers are not yet available but the school's assessment is that low targets are unlikely to be met. Although a small minority of students can be seen to be making satisfactory progress, too many others are making slow progress or regressing.

The quality of teaching

There is little evidence to suggest that teaching is improving at the necessary rate to help students close the gap between their current achievement and national expectations. Lesson observations show that the quality of teaching varies considerably, not only between different teachers, but also in the consistency and quality of individuals' practice. The school's evaluation of teaching, based on its own lesson observations, is over-generous, just as it was at the time of the February 2012 inspection. A small amount of teaching is good, such as in an English lesson where students were developing a broadcast script. Students were encouraged to recall what they had done the previous lesson, expectations were made clear, the lesson proceeded at a good pace and towards the end of the lesson the teacher left enough time to involve students in checking what they had learned and how they were going to use this in the next lesson. Weaker teaching was evident when students were supervised rather than taught or when behaviour management was ineffective, resulting in lessons where no learning took place because all students had left, leaving none to teach. In most cases, assessment is not sufficiently accurate to be used to set suitably challenging targets for individuals. In some lessons there is no variation in the tasks even when there is a huge range of ability. Very few lesson plans make any reference to prior attainment.

Subject leadership, especially in English and mathematics, is developing satisfactorily. What is holding back faster improvement is that not enough is being done to plan and monitor the contribution all subjects can make to the promotion of numeracy and literacy across the school. There are good examples, such as in a physical education lesson where students were taught about the desirable angle at which they should hold their badminton racquets and to estimate the height at which they threw the shuttlecock when serving. The promotion of literacy across the curriculum remains weak because most teachers rarely expect students to produce written work of any length or quality. With support from specialist leaders in education from the local teaching school alliance, a suitable plan is now in place to improve teaching and learning. This includes training on the teaching of phonics.

During the monitoring inspection no use of information and communication technology (ICT) was seen. Other than a few pieces of word-processed writing there is little to suggest that students use ICT sufficiently frequently or with any confidence. Students remain heavily over-reliant on adult support to manage their behaviour and learning. In some lessons, teachers give students opportunities to complete tasks on their own but this is not the same as encouraging independent learning through research and investigation.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good in order to raise achievement, especially in English and mathematics – inadequate

Behaviour and safety of students

During the monitoring inspection it was clear that behaviour remains a concern. Several lessons were interrupted by bad behaviour which is frequently interfering with students'

learning. An additional difficulty is that some students are in the habit of walking out of school for very little reason. There are over 800 instances of this on record in the current school year. Although appropriate procedures are rigorously followed this has a negative impact on the school's ability to ensure the safety of students. Bad language is frequently heard. Literacy and numeracy difficulties, especially the former, continue to cause frustration and misbehaviour. This leads some teachers to lower their expectations of what students should record in writing so as to avoid confrontation. It is very clear that many students have very little pride in their work and not enough is being done to engender more. Since the inspection of February 2012, no students have transferred into or out of the school from mainstream schools so transition arrangements have not been tested. Planning to improve transition arrangements between Galsworthy School and the pupil referral unit is an integral part of the future relocation on to a single site. Senior staff are prudently looking to visit similarly co-located schools and pupil referral units in other local authorities.

Attendance remains low. It is lower than in the year before the last inspection and is 10 percentage points short of the target set for this year. With over 50% absence in Year 11, it is clear that this group of students has not responded to initiatives to reduce absence. Other groups have responded better. In a good initiative, the school took over transport arrangements for a targeted group of students. These students are picked up by members of staff rather than using taxis. Since the start of this initiative 80% have improved their attendance by as much as 40%. In response to this success story the programme has recently been extended to about a half of all students. The initiative has had a further beneficial impact in that it has improved partnerships and communication with parents and carers.

There has been insufficient increase in the range of good quality alternative provision over the past term but there are advanced plans to extend the range of accredited work-related learning opportunities for Key Stage 4 students next year. These extend from understanding the military, to childcare courses. The range and frequency of extra-curricular activities are improving. Residential trips are a popular inducement to students to improve their behaviour and attendance but have not fully become an entitlement for all rather than a reward.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve attendance – inadequate
- improve behaviour – inadequate

The quality of leadership and management of the school

Although there have been improvements, much of the planning for improvement lacks urgency. For instance, the school development plan identifies the need to map numeracy and its uses across the whole curriculum and then support and monitor it within all subjects. The deadline for this is July 2013 which, although it is a priority area for improvement, is after the date at which the school hopes to be removed from special measures. In another instance, the school unrealistically anticipates being removed from special measures with a persistent absentee rate of 45%. One of the things that is getting in the way of faster

improvement is the issue of staff trying to explain why things are as they are rather than what they are going to do to improve them.

Plans and self-evaluation documents do now contain measurable targets and strategies to raise achievement, but it is not sufficiently clear what informs the target-setting process. Targets for improvements in attendance, for instance, appear to be arbitrary. There is insufficient clarity in the linking of initiatives for improvement and their expected impact. Insufficient attention has been paid to prioritising actions.

A tracking system to monitor and improve academic achievement is in place in mathematics. It is simple but it is too soon to evaluate its effectiveness and the absence of a similar system in other subjects means that comparisons between subjects cannot be made.

Suitable progress has been made in extending leadership duties and empowering individual staff to take responsibility for different subjects and aspects of the school's work. Within this increasingly distributive management structure, some members of staff are thriving. There is little staff absence and expectations are rising. The school is developing a capacity to improve that was not in evidence at the time of the February 2012 inspection. The difficulty is that many staff members, including the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher, have very little experience in their current leadership roles and underestimate the amount of work that needs to be done or the urgency of the task.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership – inadequate

External support

The local authority has provided satisfactory support to the school. Two helpful initiatives have been welcomed by the school. The support and guidance offered by the associate headteacher have been effective and much appreciated but they have been limited by time constraints. The school needs more than a day a week of support and the local authority recognises the need for more. The danger is that to provide it risks fragmenting the support and convoluting an already complex situation. An additional support package, including a review of the curriculum and the development of more vocational opportunities, did not get off the ground because other parts of the package did not meet with the approval of the headteacher and staff governors. The school's leaders and managers have greatly appreciated the local authority's initiative to support it through the work of the local teaching school alliance.

The school's leaders and managers, the local authority and the associate headteacher do not see eye-to-eye with the result that personal differences are getting in the way of the drive for improvement. A difficulty in the provision of external support from the local authority is that it has demonstrated a limited understanding of the problems facing the school. It misjudged the effectiveness of the school prior to the section 5 inspection, believing it to have been at least satisfactory, and currently believes that satisfactory

progress has been made in three of the four areas for improvement when the monitoring inspection finds progress in all four to be inadequate.

The statement of action produced by the local authority is fit for purpose but some of the timescales are awry. The published statement says that the target for removal from special measures is July 2013 but the school and its governing body believe that the target was April 2013, as do the local authority representatives spoken to during the monitoring inspection. Anomalies such as this confuse planning for improvement, especially in terms of setting realistic deadlines.