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31 January 2013

Ms Felicity Martin  
The Clere School  
Earlstone Common  
Newbury  
RG20 9HP

Dear Ms Martin

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Clere School**

Following my visit with Raye Allison-Smith, Additional Inspector, to your school on 29 January to 30 January 2013, 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 December 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 – good.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – good.

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed in mathematics and one newly qualified teacher may be appointed in science.

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 interim executive board and the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2011**

- Eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and raise achievement of all groups of students by:
  - \_ ensuring that there is a shared approach to judging levels of attainment and agree what good and outstanding progress means in relation to students' starting points
  - \_ using assessment data and information about individual needs to plan lessons that interest and challenge students of differing abilities and extend their thinking
  - \_ ensuring all staff are focused on what students are learning in individual lessons and the longer term, in order to meet suitably challenging targets.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management and governance by:
  - \_ making senior leaders accountable for evaluating all aspects of the school's work with greater rigour and accuracy
  - \_ ensuring the performance and experience of different groups are tracked and analysed
  - \_ implementing clearly focused plans to rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning and share good and outstanding practice across the school
  - \_ communicating consistently high expectations and an explicit vision for improvement that is clearly understood by staff, parents and carers and students
  - \_ applying the school's behaviour management system consistently and taking effective action to tackle persistent absence.

## **Special measures: monitoring of The Clere School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 29–30 January 2013**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed parts of 19 lessons taught by 19 teachers. Fifteen lesson observations were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors reviewed planning and students' work in lessons and talked to two student focus groups. Inspectors met with school staff, the chair of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority. They also talked to a small group of parents and carers and reviewed home–school correspondence. Inspectors examined a range of school documents, including self-evaluation and information about students' achievement, behaviour and attendance.

#### **Context**

There have been no significant contextual changes since the time of the previous monitoring inspection.

#### **The quality of teaching**

Unvalidated attainment at GCSE in 2012 improved for all groups of students when compared to 2011. The proportion of students attaining five GCSEs at grades A\*–C including English and mathematics and making the expected progress from Key Stage 2 improved from below to slightly above the national average. Examination results in the school's specialist design and technology subjects were significantly above the average. The attainment gap between those pupils eligible for the pupil premium and their peers narrowed, strongly in English. Overall, students had made faster progress than the year before. Nevertheless, the proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE remains too low. Current achievement for most groups of students is improving as a result of more consistent teaching, better individual support and increased student motivation. However, the rate of progress made by middle-ability pupils, particularly boys, is slower than for other groups. Leaders are tackling any variations in performance in a resolute manner.

The proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding continues to rise steadily. Leaders are addressing successfully the quickly diminishing proportion of teaching that requires further improvement. Incidences of inadequate teaching are now rare. Teachers have higher expectations and use the better information they have about students' prior and current levels of attainment to plan lessons that are more interesting and enable students to make faster progress. Lesson plans are generally clear, coherent and imaginative. Activities are more closely tailored to the needs and interests of students. Consequently, students usually work with greater concentration and higher levels of personal engagement.

Mutually respectful relationships between teachers and students are a strong feature of the school; most lessons are now characterised by very positive attitudes towards learning. Year 11 students told inspectors that they had embraced the school's mantra of 'attitude determines altitude', recognising that their active engagement and ambition play a crucial role in improving their achievement.

In most lessons, clear learning objectives are shared with pupils. Overall, the 'success criteria' which help students to evaluate their work are much improved. These criteria enable students to see progression in the skills or knowledge they must demonstrate in order to achieve their more challenging personal targets. Occasionally criteria are too generic, are referred to only briefly or are not revisited sufficiently to consolidate learning. Generally, little time is wasted in lessons which proceed at a brisk pace. However, in some lessons the over lengthy 'starter' activities limit students' time to complete key work to a high enough standard.

In the best lessons teachers use paired, small group and whole class activities to enable students to discuss their learning and develop wider social and interpersonal skills. In a successful science lesson, for example, an active approach to learning about the electromagnetic spectrum helped students to develop skills of leadership, decision making and collaboration. Teachers' repertoire of questioning techniques has also improved. In a successful English lesson, for example, a wide range of pupils were able to demonstrate their growing understanding of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* because the teacher's approach to managing feedback was well planned. However, the quality of teacher-led class discussion remains inconsistent and some question-and-answer sessions limit the progress made by the full range of students.

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

- Eliminating inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and raising achievement for all groups of students – good.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The interim headteacher has a passionate determination to ensure that the school continues to improve quickly and sustainably. Staff and students share this aspirational vision. The capacity of senior leaders has grown discernibly; their roles have been reviewed and clearly defined. Leaders carry out their duties with energy and confidence. Middle leaders benefit from regular opportunities to share successful practice and observe teaching in their departments. They have a clearer understanding of developmental priorities and welcome greater accountability through strengthened line management.

Overall, the performance of different groups of students is tracked more carefully. Analysis of information about students' achievement is increasingly accurate and

enables leaders to respond quickly when groups are underperforming. The school's systems for promoting good attendance have also improved. In 2012, attendance improved at a faster rate than nationally and was above average for most groups. The proportion of students who are regularly absent from school fell to well below the national average. Students who find it difficult to come to school told inspectors that their attendance and motivation had improved greatly because of the individualised support they receive from staff. Nevertheless, analyses of student performance and experience do not always substantiate the measurable impact of the actions that are taken to improve outcomes at group level.

Leaders have a much clearer view of where teaching is strongest and where it needs to improve, based on increasingly accurate monitoring of lessons and careful auditing of teachers' skills and areas for development. The impact of professional development, including opportunities to collaborate and share good practice, can be seen visibly in teachers' more consistent approaches in lessons and their increased willingness to innovate in order to promote better learning and engagement.

The interim executive board continues to support and challenge the school robustly under the astute leadership of its chair. Prudently, it has emphasised to leaders a need to maintain a clear focus on the performance of different groups, including those students that have special educational needs and those that are eligible for the pupil premium. The chair of the interim executive board is working with the local authority to ensure that the process for appointing a substantive headteacher and convening a shadow governing body takes place at the earliest opportunity.

The majority of parents and carers told inspectors that communication between the school and home was getting better. In particular, the improved website provides useful resources that help them to support their children's learning. Most parents and carers told inspectors that they have increased confidence in school leaders. They also praised teachers' often detailed knowledge of their children and noted that students are much prouder of the school. Nevertheless, valid concerns were raised by some about students' lack of progress in particular subject areas and variations in the quality of teaching within some departments.

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

- Improving the effectiveness of leadership and management and governance – good.

### **External support**

Local authority link advisers are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for development. Consequently, external support is well targeted. Advisers and consultants have contributed well to improving the quality of teaching and strengthening provision for students with special educational needs. Support for the

core subject areas has been particularly effective. Understandably, there has been less of a focus on the foundation subjects; this is recognised as an important area of work in the near future. Support for leaders at all levels in the school has been helpful. Nevertheless, the process for appointing a substantive headteacher and convening a shadow governing body needs to accelerate so that the longer-term leadership of the school is secure.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Accelerate existing plans to appoint a substantive headteacher and to convene a shadow governing body in order to secure the longer-term leadership capacity of the school.