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Mrs A Elwiss
The Coseley School
Henne Drive
Coseley
Bilston
WV14 9JW

Dear Mrs Elwiss

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Coseley School

Following my visit with Gwendoline Coates, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Janet Harvey, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25 and 26 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures. Newly qualified teachers may be appointed, but not in mathematics or design technology.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Dudley local authority.

Yours sincerely

Robert Barbour
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teaching consistently challenges all students, especially the more able, in all subjects and particularly in English and mathematics
 - students have more opportunities to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning
 - students start work quickly without listening to long introductions and a brisk pace of learning is maintained throughout the lesson.

- Raise achievement, particularly for the most able, by ensuring that:
 - work consistently challenges and engages all students so that they make good progress in lessons
 - challenging targets are set as a minimum expectation
 - students do not end studies in English language and mathematics early without having the chance to achieve the best possible grade
 - GCSE results in all subjects are at least in line with national expectations.

- Improve the effectiveness and impact of leaders at all levels by ensuring that:
 - the ambition of the school is communicated clearly so that all staff share a collective understanding and agreement on how to improve further
 - leaders, at all levels, take more responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement in their subject areas through a rigorous process of monitoring and evaluation to drive improvement
 - all success criteria in improvement plans are measurable and ambitious, which are reviewed regularly in order to assess the impact of actions to drive school improvement.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 June 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the Chair and another member of the Interim Executive Board, a representative of the local authority, senior and middle leaders. Inspectors observed 23 lessons.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has become a co-operative learning trust in partnership with Hillcrest School, Dudley College, the local authority and the Cooperative College. Two new assistant headteachers have joined the school: one with responsibility for English and literacy and one with responsibility for mathematics and numeracy.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The progress made by students continues to improve. In English, students are now making very much better progress. Students respond well to the high level of challenge, take responsibility for their own learning and participate actively in group work and discussion. These features were also observed in drama and modern foreign languages. In mathematics and some subjects in the technology faculty, including design technology, information technology and business studies, the rate of improvement is slower. The targets for students are more challenging now in mathematics, but the schemes of work do not currently match these expectations well enough.

More-able students are making much better progress in English as the high quality of questioning and classroom discussion stretches them to think more deeply. In many other subjects, they make less progress in lessons as the quality of classroom discussion is at a lower level. In both mathematics and English, student progress continues to benefit now that all students study the subjects throughout Year 11 and so can achieve the best possible grade for their ability.

Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making better progress. In Year 7, these students are making rapid progress due to a strong emphasis on developing their literacy skills. An inclusion unit has been very successful in helping students in Year 11, who were at risk of exclusion, in gaining useful qualifications. Staff in this unit are also working effectively to support students throughout the school. Students who qualify for the pupil premium have benefited from a range of interventions to improve their performance. However, standards for other students are also improving so that the gap between students who qualify for the pupil premium and other students is not closing appreciably in Year 11. It

remains about three quarters of a GCSE grade in English and about one GCSE grade in mathematics.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to improve. It is at its strongest in the Communications Faculty that comprises English and modern foreign languages. Teachers in several lessons observed enabled students to make outstanding progress due to their skilled questioning and high expectations. A Year 10 English set of lower ability boys made outstanding progress in studying 'Macbeth'. The teacher enabled the students to respond at length and think hard. As a result, the students understand the play well and their written work is improving in line with their speaking skills. Similarly a set of high ability girls in Year 9 also made outstanding progress studying 'Of Mice and Men'. The teacher enabled the students to work in groups, where students fed off each other's enthusiasm. In questioning the class, the teacher gave students thinking time and expected answers with a high level of reflection. The teacher was also highly skilled in drawing out the social and moral dimensions of the text.

In many subjects, teachers' questioning skills are not as well developed. Teachers sometimes ask too many closed questions; are too content with the first answer given; are not providing thinking time; and are asking questions with too low a level of challenge.

The quality of teaching has improved in mathematics, but to a lesser extent than in English. It is held back by schemes of work that are not well matched to students' abilities and do not provide sufficient consistency of practice between teachers. The newly appointed assistant headteacher with responsibility for mathematics has designed schemes of work that are of much higher quality. However, these have yet to be implemented. In the technology faculty the quality of teaching is not improving fast enough, despite the very good practice present in art. Across the school, teachers have been successful in sharpening their introductions to lessons, and getting students involved in learning more quickly.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school is a calm and well-ordered environment. The behaviour of students continues to improve, and this is illustrated by the steady decline in fixed-term exclusions. Staff in the inclusion unit have worked successfully to support Year 11 students who were at risk of exclusion; they have also been successful in helping younger students to overcome serious behaviour traits and to integrate well back in class. The attendance of students had dipped at the last monitoring visit in March, but it has since improved to its previous level.

In the vast majority of lessons observed, students' behaviour was good. However, there are a few classes where teachers do not demonstrate high levels of skills in managing behaviour. In part, this is because their teaching is less engaging. It is also because they do not assert their authority and do not use the school's behaviour systems consistently. In these few classes, students spend time off task and their behaviour requires improvement.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The quality of leadership and management continues to improve. School leaders monitor the progress of the school carefully through regular departmental reviews, reviews of the quality of teaching and analysis of the performance of students. School planning is evaluated and modified as needed. Leaders communicate well so that staff share a common ambition for the school. Leaders have been successful in improving the quality of teaching, most notably in English.

A new policy was introduced in the autumn term for managing the performance of staff. Since March there has been a revised approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning which is clear in its ambition that only good teaching is good enough. The policy provides for regular monitoring, for support where that is needed and, furthermore, expects rapid improvement where teaching is less than good.

The Interim Executive Board continues to provide a high level of challenge to school leaders. Its minutes show close monitoring of all aspects of the school, including the new performance management arrangements and the use of the pupil premium funding. The board has developed a strategy towards the re-establishment of a governing body within the next twelve months. Part of this strategy is the new status of the school as a cooperative learning trust. The board of this trust should hold the future governing body to account and formalise continuing support with partner organisations.

Two assistant headteachers are very new in their posts. However, the quality of their plans for improvement is high and has already strengthened the capacity of the leadership team. While the quality of leadership is improving at all levels, some subject leadership is still not strong enough.

External support

Currently, external support for the school is principally supplied by the local authority and by Hillcrest School. This continues to be of high quality and is making a material impact on the school's improvement. A review of the school's progress, undertaken by the local authority in partnership with Hillcrest School, contained good insight and advice.