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27 June 2013

Mr Nick Joseph
Headteacher
Hope High School
Carfield
Skelmersdale
Lancashire
WN8 9DP

Dear Mr Joseph

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hope High School

Following my visit to your school on 26 June 2013, I am writing 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 the school has taken since its recent section 5 inspection.

This was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection in March 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan.

Context

Since the time of the previous inspection an executive headteacher has been appointed, who is currently headteacher at Elm Tree School. He has the specific responsibility of implementing the improvement plan and leading the school out of special measures. Currently he spends about three days a week in the school

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The effectiveness of leadership and management remains weak, although it has been significantly bolstered by the appointment of the executive headteacher.

There are significant inconsistencies in the way leaders measure the current quality of students' behaviour. Until baselines for expected standards of behaviour are agreed and consistently applied, the school will not move forward at the required pace. Similarly there are differing opinions among leaders about the current quality of teaching and the impact this has on students' learning and progress. These differences need to be resolved as a matter of urgency. Teachers need clear guidance on how their performance will be measured.

Governors have not brought about the necessary improvements quickly enough. They are not asking simple questions about the impact of work done so far. They have not set straightforward challenging targets for leaders.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose. The statement includes all the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report together with appropriate targets for improvement and resource implications.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose. It is too complicated. It lacks focus on improving students' behaviour and the management of behaviour. Measures to improve the quality of teaching rely too heavily upon the proportion of good or better teaching observed. Insufficient weight is given to the impact of teaching over time to students' progress. The plan does not address the impact students' behaviour has on their social and moral development and the knock-on effect this can have on students' life chances. Although in the main students leave the school to take up employment or training opportunities, these placements will fail if students behave in a disrespectful way towards employers.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The single central register of safeguarding checks had not been updated to record new staff. This was updated on the day of this visit.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Interim Executive Director for Children & Young People for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector