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3 October 2013

Mr Robert Ellis  
Executive Headteacher  
Deptford Green School  
Amersham Vale  
London  
SE14 6LQ

Dear Mr Ellis

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Deptford Green School**

Following my visit with Ann Short and June Woolhouse, Additional inspectors, to your school on 1 and 2 October 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2013. 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. The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection, by agreement with me.

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 (IEB) and the Director of Children's Services for Lewisham and as below.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2013.**

- Ensure that teaching is good or better throughout the school by:
  - making sure that the tasks teachers set in lessons are at the right level to get the best out of all students, especially the most able
  - developing the use of questions in lessons to check students' understanding and involve them more in their learning
  - improving feedback to students so that they know how to improve their work and checking that students act upon teachers' suggestions
  - making sure all teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour in lessons, the amount of work they do and the presentation of their work.
  
- Improve students' achievement in mathematics by:
  - eradicating weaknesses in mathematics teaching
  - improving their mathematics skills, especially in carrying out calculations and their ability to apply their skills to solving problems.
  
- Improve students' achievement in the sixth form by using information about their progress effectively to check how they are doing and ensure that all reach their challenging targets.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, managers and the governing body by ensuring that:
  - systems for checking students' progress and the quality of teaching are used effectively to bring about the required improvements
  - newly appointed school leaders have the sufficient skills and confidence to be able to take full responsibility for improving teaching and achievement in their respective areas
  - governors are more active in monitoring the school and checking that agreed actions have had the intended impact.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 October 2013**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the three members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and three representatives from Lewisham local authority. Inspectors observed teaching in 18 classes, mostly with senior leaders, and shorter visits were made to other classes to scrutinise the quality of teachers' marking and students' work.

### **Context**

Several teachers left the school at the end of the summer term. A new assistant headteacher joined the school to lead the mathematics department. Four newly qualified teachers and two teachers from the Teach First programme also joined in September. No students have been recruited into Year 12 this year.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

The achievement of students in their GCSE results in 2013 shows improvement in some key areas including mathematics. The percentage of students attaining A\* to C grades in GCSE mathematics rose by 5% and the percentage making expected and better than expected progress exceeded the percentage in 2012. Some students who join the school in Year 7 with a Level 5 or 6 in English and mathematics are not being stretched to attain the top grades in their GCSE courses.

The percentage of students securing five good A\* to C passes at GCSE including English and mathematics rose to 53%, from 47% in 2012. Some subjects such as music, art, religious education, sociology and geography showed gains in the percentage of A\* to C grades, notably sociology by 17% and music by 39%. Conversely GCSE results in history, drama, French and graphics declined. Students studying BTEC courses in science and physical education performed well last year. The inclusion of vocational courses in nutrition, equality and diversity and the Adult Literacy and Adult Numeracy course (ALAN) is enabling students to access courses that are suited to their needs, and do well as a result.

Despite some improvements in GCSE results there remain gaps in the achievement of boys and girls, less-able students and students eligible for free school meals. The progress and attainment of students who have special educational needs remain variable across subject areas. The progress of students in Key Stage 3 in English and mathematics is improving.

The results in the sixth form in 2013 were extremely disappointing and of serious concern. Several students left with no qualifications at all reflecting poor advice and guidance in their choice of courses. Very few students achieved their target grades. Senior leaders and the IEB made judicious decisions to suspend recruitment to the sixth form. In addition, the number of courses now operating for Year 13 has been significantly reduced. Senior leaders have worked diligently and with the best outcomes for students in mind, to guide each student in their decision to stay in the sixth form for Year 13 or pursue courses at local colleges.

Year 13 classes are very small and students are being monitored by senior leaders. The first progress review this half term is imminent. Senior leaders recognise that securing the very best possible achievement for students studying A-level courses and the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme is vital to redeveloping the sixth form provision for September 2014. In lessons inspectors observed some good teaching but also teaching and marking that require improvement. In some classes, despite their small size, teachers' planning does not cater for the differing needs and abilities of students.

### **The quality of teaching**

Inspectors saw some good teaching in English, physical education (PE) and in mathematics. Good teaching was characterised by questioning to probe students' understanding, checking their knowledge as lessons progress without stop-start tokenistic plenaries. A good balance of praise with appropriate challenge motivates students to do well in these subjects. Students are also pleased with the quality of teaching in art, English and modern foreign languages and members of the student council were unanimous that there is a definite improvement in mathematics teaching. Even so, all teaching could better serve the most able and those students who need to work at a slower pace with easier work.

Led by a new assistant headteacher, the teaching in the mathematics department is improving. There is better use of mathematical vocabulary. In some lessons students are challenged to use and apply their mathematical knowledge in solving problems linked to everyday contexts, such as data handling and arithmetic skills in managing budgets and working out profit. In other lessons teachers demonstrate a particular concept which students then copy from the board and rather mundanely complete a series of questions, all doing the same, which develops repetition of the same skill and recall of facts, as opposed to explanation and detailed analysis. Senior and middle leaders have yet to ensure that progression in students' mathematical knowledge and understanding is embedded within planning across all subjects.

Despite improvements in some teaching, and the significant decline in inadequate teaching, there remains inconsistency within and across departments. The primary reason for this is the lack of incisive use of achievement data to plan lessons that always meet the needs of every student. Planning is not catering for different needs by setting easier or harder work according to the student's ability. Some students

become passive because the work is too easy. Sometimes, there are missed opportunities to deepen students' subject knowledge and skills because students do the same work, at the same pace and the brightest students are not challenged to try more demanding work.

When teaching is good, students take pride in their work. During the visit some students were keen to show inspectors the improvements in their work. Senior leaders and heads of house are reminding teachers that high-quality marking and feedback enable students to improve their work. Teachers are marking more regularly. There is some good marking that scaffolds guidance about what to improve, and how and why; and students then make the effort to respond. This is not consistent throughout the school. Work is often presented neatly, and there was evidence both of students' interest in their work and teachers' marking guiding their development and supporting good progress. Inspectors also saw the opposite of this. Some work was poorly presented, lacking in detail and occasionally unfinished. This work showed little enthusiasm for learning, involving poor literacy skills and no responses to teachers' marking. In some subjects the level of expectation of what students should achieve, in both quantity and high quality subject knowledge in a lesson and over time, is too low.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

There is a positive atmosphere in the school that is supporting improvements in behaviour and, for some, better attitudes to learning. Students recognise the impact of teachers being more consistent in dealing with any low-level disruption or chatter in lessons. They confirm that behaviour in lessons is improving because teaching is improving. They also say that behaviour in lessons is mostly good, but inspectors observed some passive behaviour when work is too easy or too hard.

Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour in lessons but this does not always translate into better attitudes to learning because some teaching is not stimulating. Some students do not care enough about the presentation of their work, developing their knowledge or pushing themselves to do better. Others are keen learners who want more demanding work from their teachers and they enjoy the determined effort teachers are making to help them do well.

Members of the student council discussed how the wider community perception of the school is starting to change. They are proud of the changes taking place and feel that leaders respond to their ideas. They like the new weekly Gazette to inform parents, carers and students what is happening in school and to celebrate events and students' achievements.

High staff presence at lesson change over times ensures that students' punctuality is monitored. A few students linger, but are firmly hurried along to their lessons. Attendance is improving and the number of students excluded for short periods of time is declining. Leaders are not yet monitoring and analysing rates of attendance

and fixed-term exclusions by student groups and collating this information alongside achievement.

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

The executive headteacher, senior leaders and the three members of the IEB are working well with the local authority to make certain that the areas for improvement are tackled effectively. This is a coherent team who all recognise that there is much still to do so that changes made to leadership roles and systems to improve teaching are sustainable and strategic and are not quick fixes.

Senior and middle leaders are setting high expectations of teachers to improve their work and secure better progress for all students. Leaders are not afraid to have challenging discussions with teachers whose practice falls below what leaders are expecting. As a result several teachers left the school last term. The executive headteacher, deputies and IEB are making it clear that the pace of change to secure consistently good teaching in all subjects and key stages is urgent. However, the inconsistency seen during this monitoring inspection necessitates rapid action this term to eliminate low expectations and poor quality of work in some subjects.

Revisions to roles and responsibilities of the six assistant headteachers as heads of houses and the heads of subjects have increased their accountability for leading and developing teaching. The decision to have the inclusion team working across the house structure means that it is better placed to monitor the needs and achievement of students with special educational needs, disabled students and those who are most vulnerable.

Senior leaders are guiding the development of the assistant headteachers to make certain that findings from teaching observations, work scrutiny and shorter visits to lessons all come together to judge teachers' work and its impact on students' achievement. Systems for monitoring teaching, scrutinising students' work, giving feedback to teachers and staff training are now in place. Inspectors observed senior leaders giving feedback to teachers, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. This is modelled for middle leaders who are becoming more involved in developing good teaching and high-quality learning with their subject teams. However, subject action plans and house action plans are not sufficiently focused on how to close the gaps in the progress and attainment of student groups. The analysis of achievement data by the senior leaders is improving but this is not filtering into subject action plans which include measurable and specific targets for students' progress.

More regular monitoring and more coaching support for all teachers to help them improve their practice are starting to improve teaching but the crucial missing link in the monitoring work is the judging of teaching and its impact over time as opposed to judging lessons. Currently too much of the monitoring of paperwork and feedback to staff focuses upon teaching and routines as opposed to the quality of students' progress in lessons and how well gaps in achievement are closing. Senior leaders

accept this needs changing, so that a focus on subject pedagogy is at the heart of improving teaching, removing the need for teachers to comply with a set of teaching techniques that they think inspectors want to see.

The programme for newly qualified teachers and teachers who join through the Teach First programme is well led. These teachers are positive about the mentoring they receive for this early stage of their careers and can evaluate how observing colleagues and personalised mentoring are guiding their teaching.

The educational expertise and determination of the IEB is coming to the fore in challenging senior leaders to bring about rapid improvement. The IEB is checking how well the school is progressing through regular and robust meetings with the executive headteacher. The board members' specific monitoring roles to work with leaders in developing teaching, mathematics and science and developing middle leadership are giving them chance to come into the school and see improvements and issues first hand. The IEB is working well to monitor the impact of the whole-school action plan but there is not enough scrutiny of subject actions plans and house action plans to hold all leaders to account for setting stringent targets for achievement. The IEB is asking demanding questions about the progress of more-able students but is not penetrating enough in its evaluation of the impact of pupil premium funding. The minutes of the IEB meetings is not doing justice to the level of debate that is evidently occurring at these meetings.

### **External support**

The local authority is providing a good balance of challenge and support to the school. There is regular monitoring of the school's progress through meetings with the IEB and the executive headteacher. Consultants from the local authority are working well with the mathematics and science teams. The local authority is fully behind the partnership work with Conisborough College, Colfe's School and Grinling Gibbons Primary School, so that leaders and teachers can visit these schools to observe outstanding practice.

The local authority has an accurate view of the school's progress to date and is acutely aware that the findings from the monitoring inspection need to shape the foci of the imminent review by the local authority.