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15 November 2013

Mr David Lamb  
Associate Executive Headteacher  
Hope High School  
Carfield  
Skelmersdale  
Lancashire  
WN8 9DP

Dear Mr Lamb

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Hope High School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 and 14 November 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 March 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 not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good or better throughout the school by:
  - teaching lessons that capture students’ interest and help them learn at a brisk pace throughout the lesson
  - raising teachers’ expectations of what students can achieve in lessons
  - making sure support staff contribute to learning in all lessons
  - providing more opportunities for students to improve their personal and social development in lessons and to work together.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - quickly establishing a vision and clear goals for school improvement
  - ensuring systems to improve learning in classes are consistent, rigorously followed, adequately staffed and fully supported by leaders and managers
  - training staff to become expert at managing challenging behaviour and improving their level of knowledge and understanding of students’ learning difficulties and how to overcome them
  - building on better practice within and external to the school
  - developing training programmes to improve staff expertise in managing complex and challenging behavioural needs
  - implementing a rigorous programme to check and improve the quality of teaching.
  
- Review the content and organisation of the curriculum to ensure the varied academic and personal learning needs of all students are better met.
  
- Improve attendance and reduce the rate of exclusions by developing an effective partnership between school and family that includes those families that are hardest to reach.
  
- Improve the governance of the school and the governing body’s ability to support and hold the school to account for its performance by:
  - securing full membership, including that of parent representatives
  - continuing to attract members who bring a range of relevant skills and expertise to governance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 13 to 14 November 2013.**

### **Evidence**

I observed the school's work, including nine lessons and a whole school assembly. I scrutinised documents including the behaviour analysis, the local authority's school effectiveness report, governing body minutes from the school improvement committee, internal assessment and tracking data, curriculum documents, pupils' books and the revised school improvement plan. I had discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, a governor on the behaviour and safety committee, two local authority representatives, senior leaders of the school, the school council and three members of staff.

### **Context**

The headteacher, deputy headteacher, and two teachers have recently left the school. You, as associate executive headteacher have been contracted by the local authority to stay at the school until 31 December 2013. Arrangements for leadership in the school beyond that time are unclear. The senior leadership team has had its roles temporarily enhanced until December 2013: until the governing body decides on substantive posts being advertised. You have been visited by the Department for Education and a sponsored process to become an academy is being considered for April 2014. The governing body plans to visit one of the sponsored academies before reaching a decision. The school currently has 32 pupils on roll in Years 7 to 11. You reorganised the school day and curriculum delivery very recently.

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

The results for last year's Year 11 students show an improvement in English and science. You are aware of the development needs in mathematics and are receiving advice and support from the local authority's mathematics advisor. Meetings with exam boards have taken place to explore a wider range of accredited courses to meet the needs of pupils working at a lower level.

Assessment data has been centralised to enable staff to use baseline assessments to set appropriate targets for pupils' progress. Progress meetings are now used to challenge teachers to monitor and support pupils' progress. You have introduced a system of moderation based on work scrutiny over time to improve consistency and validity of baseline assessments. Information about groups of pupils is being used more effectively to target interventions and support for pupils. There are some indications that progress is improving, however, these processes are still in an early stage of development so tracking of achievement, across the school over time, varies in reliability.

The new learning resource support is improving the academic and social skills of pupils to enable greater access to the curriculum. Staff are enthusiastic about this and could detail examples including the successful reintegration of a pupil back into mainstream education this term. Staff are beginning to share their knowledge about pupils' academic attainment and progress, however, this needs to be done more consistently.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving due to the improvement in behaviour management. Pupils have improved attitudes to learning. Teaching assistants support learning well and I saw evidence of firm and consistent behaviour management by them in class and around the school site.

Teachers are less reliant on worksheets and keeping pupils occupied to manage behaviour. As a result, there is more emphasis on encouraging discussion to explore ideas and check on pupils' understanding. I observed improved teaching where the teacher had high expectations of all the pupils, checked their skills, knowledge and understanding throughout the lesson and reinforced improved behaviour by maintaining the pupils' interest and enjoyment in the lesson. However, in weaker lessons, teachers missed opportunities to develop the pupils' learning through not responding to lines of enquiry raised by the pupils. In some lessons expectations remain too low and teachers did not challenge or make learning relevant enough to interest the pupils and encourage positive participation. Positive comments are made in pupils' books but it is not always made clear to pupils how they can improve their work. As a result, some pupils rely on teachers too often and do not take enough responsibility for their own learning.

The revised school curriculum and structure of the day provide opportunities for students to improve their personal and social developments in lessons. They are able to work more effectively together. This increased cooperation was evident in the Year 7 and 8 lessons and in some of the more social sessions, for example, tutor-time. The younger pupils have opportunities to develop independence and work collaboratively and this is beginning to show dividends with improved behaviour and an improved attitude to learning. However, the older pupils have less flexibility and independence due to lower expectations concerning their behaviour. As a result, some pupils are not being stretched or challenged to make progress more quickly, because teachers' expectations remain too low. Consequently, some pupils say they are bored and this leads to low-level disruption at times.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Staff have concentrated on improving behaviour and this has worked well, so there is a more positive attitude to learning and this is reflected in the calmer atmosphere around the school. Pupils feel safer and say the short breaks and lunchtimes have reduced opportunities for negative behaviour. The analysis of school data, comparing the same time frame last year with this year, shows that permanent and fixed-term exclusions have reduced significantly and attendance has improved by 10 percentage points.

Interventions have been put in place such as the use of reflection, use of a 'safe space' and study support and these are being monitored to show the impact on the improved behaviour of individual pupils in the longer term. Restorative justice has also been introduced to help tackle poor behaviour and incidents of verbal bullying have reduced. Girls are in a minority in the school and want staff to be aware of their difficulties in building positive relationships. The school council discussed setting up an anti-bullying group. The curriculum development of 'opening minds' has also been recently introduced to improve social interaction.

The new behaviour policy and practice has been introduced after consultation and training and this, coupled with the points' system, gives a clear baseline for expected behaviour and enables better monitoring to show the impact of recent interventions. However, there needs to be greater consistency in the application of the policy and the points system to enable improvement in behaviour to be sustained. Patterns of physical intervention need to be monitored so alternative methods can be used to reduce the number of incidents where physical intervention is necessary.

Pupils were generally well-behaved during the emergency service presentation and the only low-level disruption came from some older pupils who were not used to large assemblies. Staff managed the occasion well and the relationships between staff and pupils have improved since the last inspection.

The single central register of safeguarding checks was checked and is up to date.

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

You have taken some good steps to improve the impact of leadership. The school improvement plan is now fit for purpose and the focus on improving pupils' behaviour has given it a clear direction. It now sets targets for improvement to happen more quickly, however, parts of the plan lack a clear method of measuring the impact of the actions on pupils' progress or school improvement. We observed some lessons together and you have a realistic view of the quality of teaching in the school. The improved curriculum provides increased opportunities for social, moral and cultural development. The curriculum now meets the pupils' behavioural, emotional and social needs more effectively and you are developing this further. You are working collaboratively with local clusters of schools to improve training opportunities for your staff and the curriculum opportunities for the pupils. Despite recent uncertainty and changes in staffing your staff are upbeat and morale is good. You have now started to make tangible progress in improving the school.

Staff training and support have made the staff pull together and recognise that the future of the school lies in their hands. They feel safer and appreciate the changes you have introduced, such as the walkie-talkies and the debrief sessions at the end of every day. They like the new school day and timetable changes as this allows time for more innovative learning: for example the bushcraft sessions. There has been rapid change and developments over the past few months and staff are excited about the future. You have rightly focused on improving behaviour and safety in the school and can now concentrate on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The governing body has undergone an external review of governance. As a result, governors developed an action plan; completed a skills audit; and work closely with the local authority to access further training and support. Membership has been reorganised and new members have joined: there is still a vacancy for another parent governor. Staff and governors are working to improve communication between school and home. A new school improvement committee has been formed and the governing body is challenging the school more effectively. The governing body minutes show a higher level of challenge although there is still a need to develop this further regarding the school's impact on pupils' progress. Governors continue to support the school and staff through the recent changes that have affected staffing and stability. The governing body has confidence in the leadership of the school and recognises the significant improvement in behaviour.

### **External support**

The local authority is committed to continue their support of the school throughout your journey out of special measures and beyond. It has confidence in your ability to move the school forward and is offering support for the newly formed senior leadership team. The local authority has supported the school during its work with the trade unions to ensure staff resolve concerns. As a result, staff feel well supported. The local authority has brokered support with other clusters of schools to develop curriculum development and assessment.