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8 November 2013

Mr Chris Smith  
Deputy Headteacher  
Foremost School  
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Menwith Hill Road  
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North Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Smith

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Foremost School**

Following my visit to your school on 7 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.

This inspection was concurrent with a full inspection of the school's residential provision. A separate report on the residential provision, now judged to be adequate, is available.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

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

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve teaching across the school so that students make at least good progress and attain the standards of which they are capable, by:
  - making sure that what is taught, and the way it is taught, captures the imagination of students so that they want to join in with learning activities and behave well
  - making sure that all teachers in all lessons take responsibility for promoting literacy and communication skills by encouraging students to write more for themselves
  - making sure that teachers use accurate assessment information to help them set work for students that matches their ability and learning needs
  - taking steps to ensure that no teaching is inadequate and enabling good teachers to see what they need to do to become outstanding.
  
- Improve leadership, management and governance of the school and residence, by:
  - making sure that all safeguarding procedures are followed at all times
  - making sure that robust evidence is gathered regularly to help inform senior leaders and governors about standards in the residence and in classrooms
  - ensuring that senior staff and governors base their evaluations of the school's effectiveness on robust, accurate evidence so that they can pinpoint what needs to be done to make improvements
  - making sure that the school employs enough good quality, permanent teachers, prioritising where support is most urgently needed and working more closely with the local authority to find the most useful help
  - making sure that the curriculum includes enough opportunities for students to follow courses that lead to accreditation that matches their potential
  - Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.
  
- Improve behaviour by:
  - making it very clear to students that, whatever their difficulties certain things are unacceptable in any circumstances and making sure that all staff are consistent in their application of sanctions
  - making sure that all staff identify times when students can take more responsibility for their behaviour and learning rather than allowing them to become dependent on adults to help them all the time
  - increasing levels of attendance and reducing the amount of time that the students who do attend are out of class.
  
- The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.
  - Where children are to leave the school on a planned date they are given appropriate information and guidance well in advance to assist in the process of transition. (NMS 2.6)
  - Children understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed decisions about their own health. They are encouraged to participate in a range of positive activities that contribute to their physical and emotional health. (NMS3.2)

- Children's wishes and feelings are sought and taken into account in their health care, according to their understanding, and staff at the school act as advocates on behalf of children. (NMS 3.3)
- Children's belongings are searched only on grounds which are explained to the child concerned, and where failure to carry out the search might put at risk the welfare of the child or others. (NMS9.4)
- The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day-to-day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans. (NMS21.1)
- The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes:
  - measures to combat bullying and to promote positive behaviour;
  - school rules;
  - disciplinary sanctions;
  - when restraint is to be used; and
  - arrangements for searching children and their possessions. (NMS 12.1)
- The policy complies with relevant legislation and guidance and is understood by staff and children [6]. (NMS12.2)
- Staff receive appropriate training and support to recognise and deal with incidences of challenging behaviour or bullying. This training should include assistance in managing staff members' responses and feelings arising from working with children who have emotional difficulties which result in challenging behaviour. Staff training is regularly refreshed. (NMS12.3)
- Methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially challenging behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid use of physical restraint. Restraint is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person (including the child who is being restrained) or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person (including the child who is being restrained). (NMS12.4)
- A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention. Records may include the information in Appendix 2 (use of physical restraint). The record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of physical intervention restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (NMS 12.6)
- All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within three months of confirmation of employment. (NMS19.2)
- New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction, beginning within seven working days of starting their employment and completing training within six months. (NMS19.3)

- The learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and is updated if necessary. (NMS19.4)
- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:
  - checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children;
  - assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and
  - opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS20.2)

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 7 November 2013.**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, including a tutorial and parts of five lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the deputy headteacher, the head of care, teachers, a duty coordinator, two students and a governor. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.

### **Context**

Following a brief period of absence due to ill health, the headteacher resigned his post shortly before the inspections were announced. While the local authority and governing body seek to make new arrangements for the leadership of the school, the deputy headteacher and head of care are taking day-to-day responsibility for leading the school. Currently, the school has five permanent teachers, two of whom are absent long term due to ill health. Of the remaining three, one has tendered his resignation as of the end of this term. There are three temporary teachers, two of whom have been seconded to the school by the local authority for this term.

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

There has been some slight improvement in achievement due to an increased emphasis on ensuring that, where possible, students leave school with qualifications. All the Year 11 students who left in July 2013, six in total, gained some qualifications and accreditations for the work they had completed. All gained a qualification in mathematics and one achieved a GCSE at grade F. However, only half achieved a qualification in English, at either entry levels 1 or 2. Students had most success in physical education, where a number gained GCSEs. The school is unable to say whether, in gaining these qualifications, students made enough progress because systems have not been in place to measure this.

A new system has been introduced very recently to remedy this. Based on students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, individual targets have been set in a number of subjects, although not for vocational courses. Targets in English and mathematics are based on the nationally expected rate of progress for students of this age. Targets are more challenging in physical education but lower in science, where previously inadequate provision means that students are starting from a low base. Students' progress towards these targets will be tracked regularly, while the smaller steps they take in learning will be recorded weekly and should form the basis for lesson planning.

A more coherent approach to ensuring that students gain accreditation for activities they participate in has been introduced. These include, not only awards linked to mathematics, information and communication technology, building and construction, and hospitality, but also those gained through activities students chose to complete as part of their residential experience. These cover areas such as household skills, personal development and accessing the community.

A whole-school approach to developing literacy through all aspects of the curriculum is at the early stages of development. Some strategies to support students' literacy skills were noted in all the lessons observed. For instance, key vocabulary linked to the topic was displayed and referred to regularly by teachers. In some lessons, teachers encouraged students to use their phonic knowledge (the links between sounds and letters) to help them read unfamiliar words. However, this was not done consistently well because not all staff are confident in this area. Staff are encouraging students to complete more written work themselves. In science, students' contributions to a book which records their lesson activities, using photographs and bold labelling, are gradually increasing. They are beginning to value this record of their work and successes.

The systems introduced to measure students' progress and support better achievement have not had time to make an impact because they are new.

### **The quality of teaching**

There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching. Some good lessons were observed and none seen was inadequate. Good relationships between staff and students characterised all the lessons visited, with learning assistants making a good contribution to learning. Staff know students very well and tailor the way they manage lessons to meet the needs of individuals. Leaders have set out clear expectations, which are being met, for ensuring that the environment in classrooms is attractive and supports learning.

In the better lessons observed, planning was well structured with a sharp focus on what students would learn by the end of the session. However, the school does not have an agreed lesson planning format and, in some instances, planning was focused on the activities students should complete rather than on what they would learn. Where this was the case, lessons were less successful.

Positive features of the lessons observed were questioning that gradually increased in difficulty, challenging students to think more deeply and sustaining their participation in activities. Questioning was also used well to reinforce students' learning by repeatedly checking their recall and understanding. In contrast, where lessons were less successful, questioning did not probe students' understanding thoroughly enough and teachers accepted brief, partial responses. Mini-whiteboards were used effectively to allow students to try out their answers before committing them to paper, so increasing their opportunities for success. Where lessons were less effective, resources were not well chosen and opportunities to use practical or visual aids were missed.

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

The school has invested heavily in training all staff in therapeutic crisis intervention. This has been embraced by those who work in the residential provision but is not implemented consistently by all education staff. This is limiting the impact of a method that is showing some success in improving behaviour and reducing the number of incidents, including of restraint. There was a substantial decrease in incidents during the summer term, a trend which has continued this term. There has been a six-fold decrease in the number of

restraints of students in September and October this year compared with the same period last year. Physical assaults on staff have also decreased substantially in the same period. There were no incidents of either type in October.

The school is monitoring behaviour incidents more thoroughly and beginning to use the information gained to determine priorities. For example, on the basis of an analysis which shows that physical incidents have declined, the school is focusing on reducing swearing and verbal abuse directed towards staff. The timetable has been adjusted in response to the high number of incidents on Mondays. Students now begin their week with practical activities designed to engage their interest and help them settle back into school after the weekend. There is not yet enough information to judge the effectiveness of this strategy. The appointment of duty coordinators, who respond rapidly to incidents in order to allow learning to recommence as swiftly as possible, is allowing senior leaders more time to fulfil their roles. The duty coordinators are managing the interviews which are part of the new restorative approach to increasing understanding and rebuilding relationships.

Students spoken to feel that there has been a small improvement in behaviour and that bullying is not a problem. They welcome the introduction of a house system, enjoying the competition to be the best house in learning, behaviour and sport. They are motivated by rewards such as trips and being named 'student of the day'. The school council is valued because students feel their views are taken into account. For instance, their suggestion of a break in the afternoon session has been adopted and they appreciate this.

Overall, attendance was low for the last academic year. Although it has improved this year, it remains too low.

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

The very recent departure of the headteacher, along with secondments of teachers, a temporary appointment and a resignation, mean that the school's staffing remains precarious. The deputy headteacher and the head of care have stepped up to the plate and are leading the school day to day. Strategic direction is much less clear, in part because the school's development plan is not a working document which has been shared with staff. While priorities reflect the areas for improvement identified in the s5 inspection report, success criteria and milestones lack precision, as do start and finish dates for activities. More detailed planning is needed to enable leaders to move forward with confidence and at pace. In addition, further clarity about the roles and responsibilities of staff is required to match the new situation. Performance management is not in place.

In order to improve teaching and learning some relevant training has taken place this term and support provided, where required, for individual teachers. Although there is some improvement in the quality of teaching, leaders are unclear about the impact of this training. Monitoring and evaluation of lessons have not been purposeful. Some lesson observations have taken place, but these have not focused sharply on the areas targeted in the training or identified common strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Regular work scrutinies have examined the implementation of the school's policy for marking and feedback. Leaders are confident that this is being used consistently and students are being given time to respond to teachers' comments. However, insufficient consideration has been given to the purpose of the work scrutinies planned for this half term.

There have been some improvements to the curriculum, mentioned previously, such as more opportunities for accreditation and changes to the timetable to enhance learning. In addition, there is an increasing selection of practically based courses offered to students. For example, land-based studies have been introduced enabling some students to develop skills and personal qualities as they learn to handle chickens, rabbits and sheep. Since the school no longer has a teacher with expertise in information and communication technology, the intention is that skills in this area are delivered across the curriculum. However, a check has not been completed to ensure that this is happening.

The school now meets requirements for safeguarding students. This is covered in more detail in the report on the residential provision.

The governing body has been getting to grips with the issues facing the school. It has established committees, including one focused on school improvement. Governors have begun tracking the school's progress against the development plan. They are linked to particular priorities and, in their frequent visits to the school, conduct their own monitoring of progress. This has been helpful in determining the accuracy of leaders' judgements and forming the basis for challenging questions about the impact for students.

### **External support**

The local authority is faced with resolving the school's significant staffing issues. This term it has arranged the secondment of two teachers to cover the core subjects of English and science. This has increased the school's capacity and contributed to an improvement in the quality of learning, albeit for a limited period. A partnership brokered with a local pupil referral service has proved less successful, since leaders were not fully involved in setting it up. Neither the purpose of the partnership overall, nor of the links for individual members of staff have been clear, so the benefits have been uncoordinated and limited. The local authority's recent review is helpful for both staff and the governing body in providing an external evaluation of the school's progress.