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Mrs Amanda Elwiss
Headteacher
The Coseley School
Henne Drive
Coseley
Bilston
WV14 9JW

Dear Mrs Elwiss

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Coseley School

Following my visit with Julie Griffiths and Timothy McGuire, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 4–5 December 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 fourth 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 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 but please contact me first to discuss any plans you may have to appoint them in design and technology or in geography.

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

Gwendoline Coates
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 and are reviewed regularly in order to assess the impact of actions to drive school improvement.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 4–5 December 2013

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised documents and held meetings with the headteacher and other school leaders, the local authority's Assistant Director of School Improvement, a member of the interim executive board and groups of Year 8 and Year 11 students. Inspectors observed parts of nine lessons jointly with senior and middle leaders and observed parts of 14 other lessons, a Year 8 assembly and a Year 11 tutor period.

Context

New appointments made since the last monitoring inspection include an assistant headteacher with pastoral responsibilities, a data manager, a curriculum leader for humanities, a teacher and a higher level teaching assistant in mathematics, two teachers of modern languages and two Teach First trainee teachers – in English and in history. In addition, teachers of mathematics and of physical education returned from maternity leave. The head of art has been promoted to acting curriculum leader for technology. The curriculum leader for expressive arts has joined the senior leadership team on a temporary basis to work with middle leaders and to monitor and support the performance of boys and students eligible for pupil premium funding.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Some headline attainment measures improved in 2013, including the attainment of higher ability students, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs. However, attainment in different subjects varied significantly, with very low levels in some. Although higher ability students made more progress in 2012/13, the progress made by all students did not show sufficient improvement over previous years. The performance of students eligible for pupil premium funding, a majority of whom are boys, had not improved and the gap between their achievement and that of other students remained too wide.

School data about students' progress since Easter 2013 are more positive. For example, students eligible for pupil premium funding are making better progress now. A range of new approaches to encouraging and developing the reading skills of Key Stage 3 students is having a demonstrable impact on improving reading ages. These improvements were reflected in the progress students made in lessons observed during the inspection. In a majority of lessons, students had good attitudes to learning and made good progress. Their targets were challenging and most students understood them. For example, in a Year 11 physical education lesson on table tennis, well-structured activities, high expectations and suitable levels of challenge ensured students made rapid progress.

The quality of teaching

Inspection findings reflected the school's own judgements that teaching has improved considerably, and much is now good or better. However, too much teaching still requires improvement and there is too much variation in quality between and within subjects. The improvements in teaching are not yet showing in better achievement for all students in all subjects.

In the most successful lessons, students made good progress because teachers organised purposeful learning activities with appropriate levels of challenge. Students were engaged and motivated because teachers created positive learning environments. Students' expectations about their own work reflected the teachers' high expectations. In a Year 7 art lesson on tonal variation, students identified the success criteria for the next stage of their work, demonstrating how well they understood what high quality work should look like and how they might achieve this. Questioning was used very effectively. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson about the effects of alcohol, the teacher's questions prompted students to think deeply and to provide extended and thoughtful responses that included appropriate academic vocabulary. In the best lessons, students collaborated together well. The promotion of literacy skills, and in particular the development of oral skills, was an explicit element of lessons. There were many examples of students assessing their own and each other's work effectively.

Where teaching required improvement, there was little evidence of teachers matching learning activities to the different ability levels of students. This is despite the fact that all teachers now have access to clear data about each student's prior attainment and current rates of progress. Teachers did not focus their planning sufficiently well on what students were expected to learn and did not adjust their teaching to deal with misconceptions.

Most teachers now follow the school's written feedback policy. However, in some students' books the same comments, for example about work lacking sufficient detail, were repeated after each piece of work. This reflected the fact that some teachers do not provide students with opportunities to respond to written feedback comments by, for example, improving a piece of work.

Inconsistency in the quality of teaching means teachers in the same subject provide students with very different levels of challenge and have very different expectations of what they can achieve. For example, in Key Stage 3 modern language lessons, the extent to which different teachers used target languages varied considerably. This affected the progress students made in developing their understanding of, and confidence in speaking, the language. In Year 7 geography lessons, the attention different teachers gave to how well students were learning varied significantly. In one lesson on brownfield and greenfield sites, well-sequenced learning activities

enabled students to make good progress and good questioning confirmed students' understanding. In another lesson on different types of settlements, there was no attempt to match learning activities to the ability of different students and the teacher failed to adjust the lesson to deal with the fact that students had not understood key terms.

Different teachers also have different levels of expectations about the same groups of students. For example, a Year 7 lower ability group made good progress in a science lesson about cells, tissues and organs because the teacher had high expectations about the progress they would make and provided them with good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills, their confidence and their collaborative skills. In contrast, for the same group in a resistant materials lesson, there was no expectation that all students should listen or be ready to respond to the teacher's questions, and there was little focus on developing literacy skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Published 2012/13 data indicate rising levels of persistent absence, overall absence and fixed term exclusions, particularly for students eligible for pupil premium funding and those with additional needs supported at 'school action'.

A renewed focus on improving attendance and behaviour has been introduced. School data from Easter 2013 demonstrate that strategies to reduce absence and exclusions and improve behaviour are beginning to have a positive impact. Exclusions have declined as a result of particular students having a personalised school-based and off-site curriculum. This has also been effective in improving their progress and their attendance and behaviour. Behaviour in lessons observed during the inspection was good overall, with students taking a responsible attitude to learning and being courteous and considerate to others. Punctuality to lessons is good. The management of behaviour is improving and while most teachers apply the school's behaviour management policy consistently, students note that this is not always the case in all lessons.

Students say they feel safe and are confident that any incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. All statutory safeguarding requirements are met.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher is determined to bring about improvement and now has a strong team of leaders to support her. The school is now fully staffed and all have a clear commitment to improve the quality of education. Expectations have been raised and everyone understands what is expected of them and has the tools, in terms of data and support, to meet these expectations.

A thorough analysis of the summer 2013 achievement results has been undertaken. Key issues identified included the accuracy of assessment and predictions. As a result, extensive external support has been introduced to establish the accuracy of assessments and bring more rigour to checking processes.

New leaders are beginning to have an impact on improving students' personal and academic outcomes. For example, leaders of English and mathematics, who joined the school in the summer term, are seeing early signs of improving achievement in their subjects as a result of changes to schemes of work, setting, class sizes and strategies to improve teaching and assessment. Leadership at subject level, particularly in design and technology and in geography, is weak. The new and acting faculty leaders in humanities and technology and the relevant subject leaders are clear about the need to improve students' achievement in these areas.

More rigorous monitoring and quality assurance systems are ensuring that everyone is accountable for, and focused on, raising outcomes for students. Judgements about the quality of teaching are accurate. Teaching is monitored regularly and where it is less than good, bespoke support and training are provided. These systems are working and the proportion of teaching that is good or better is increasing steadily. The management of teachers' performance is now rigorous. Staff at every level have targets linked specifically to improving students' achievement.

Data systems allow more timely and focused support to be provided. However, further work is needed on analysing the progress made by students with different types of special educational need and the impact of additional support. The inadequate performance of students eligible for pupil premium funding has been a spur to a more effective focus on their achievement and a much better whole-school understanding of strategies necessary to improve their attendance, behaviour, engagement and achievement. School data indicate some improvement in these outcomes as a result.

The interim executive board provides leaders with real challenge and monitors the school's progress regularly and in detail. Its members are well informed and knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and its priorities for improvement. They also have a very good contextual understanding of the community the school serves.

External support

External support is ensuring the school can move forward and improve its performance. The local authority makes termly monitoring visits and has helped to arrange additional subject-specific support. The Co-operative Trust partners are providing the school with external capacity, support and challenge. Other schools are providing support to assure the accuracy of teachers' assessment and experienced

external practitioners have been commissioned to support the school in reviewing its practice in a number of subjects, including English, art, and design and technology.